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"HALLO!—KEEP STILL—STILL AS THE GRAVE, MYRA; I HEAR—HA! HERE THEY COME!"

Was It Love? or, Collegians and Sweethearts.

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CHAPTER I. JEALOUSY.

THE tall young gentleman stamped his small, daintily fitting boot on the broad marble step of the aristocratic mansion—one of the proudest on Prospect street—and shivered as he drew his wide loose cape around him. For the raw winter wind of the declining December afternoon, which tossed his long, dark hair so wildly about, was cold and searing, and he had rung twice.

Again he applied his gloved hand to the silver pull, and again he heard distinctly the far-away tinkle of the warning bell.

At length, hasty steps sounded in the hall, the bolt turned, and the door opened.

"Ah! it is you, Mr. Thorne! Walk in, sir, if you please," said the girl, respectfully.

"It is I, certainly, Mary, and right glad am I to get in, for I am half-frozen," replied the youth, as he entered the comfortable hall, and turned into the elegant, dimly-lit parlor. He was perfectly at home.

"I am so sorry, Mr. Thorne, I kept you waiting," said the girl, taking

his cape and light check-silk cap. "I thought Tom, the lazy fellow, had answered the bell. I was up in Miss Myra's room, fixing her hair for the ball."

"Ah! so soon? I am here to see Miss Hoxley about the same thing. Please tell her so, Mary."

"Yes, sir," and the girl left the room, while Fenton Thorne unbuttoned his closely fitting frock-coat, and strode briskly up and down the thick-carpeted room, rubbing his benumbed fingers the while, to bring back circulation and warmth.

"Yes, yes!" muttered the young man, as if determined upon a certain course of action, "I will go with Myra to this ball! I'll run the risk of being caught out of my room at college; it will be the first time. I am desirous of seeing this wondrous beauty, Madeleine Fleming, of whom good old Steve speaks so much. She *must* be pretty and smart, and amiable, and all that, if Steve says so! And yet, Myra does not seem to like her, if—"

At this moment, there was a patter of hurrying feet down the broad stairway; then came the crush and rustle of a sweeping dress. The door opened, and the tall, slender form of Myra Hoxley, the rich manufacturer's daughter, clad in an elegant afternoon *neglige*, entered the room. She stepped at once to the window, and flung open the half-closed shutters, letting in the straggling sunlight, fast disappearing behind the heavy snow-racks, scudding across the sky.

"You are in the dark, Fenton," she said, turning toward the young man, at the same time extending her small, nervous white hand cordially. "Be seated, my friend, and don't be stamping around the

room like a soldier on guard. 'Twas too bad in Mary to keep you out until you were so entirely frozen!" she laughed, merrily, as she flung herself on a yielding sofa, and beckoned the collegian to her side.

Fenton Thorne obeyed at once.

"I am warm enough now, Miss Myra, and—" "Miss Myra! Why, Fenton, I thought I had taught you better your a, b, c's, certainly in this house," and she flashed over him a radiant, yet half-reproachful look.

The young man colored despite himself; he was but a youth, and not well versed in the ways and wiles of womankind. But he quickly recovered himself, as, smiling sweetly, he bowed his head, with its mass of raven hair.

But that singular expression which came over Fenton Thorne's face as his head went down! Was it expressive of distrust, or—contempt?

It were difficult to answer; and then the youth was so open, so innocent and unsuspicious.

However, when he raised his head, his face was frank and friendly, as he said:

"Well, well, Myra then! And—it is a pretty name, too!"

The girl's face mantled just the slightest; but a look of unmistakable satisfaction, nay of triumph, shot from her dark, lustrous eyes.

"That's right, Fenton," she said in a low, insinuating voice; "call me Myra, and I'll always know you as Fenton. I like it."

For a few moments there was a silence, which, however, was broken by the student.

"I called, Miss—I mean Myra—to see about this ball at Mr. Fleming's, and to learn your arrangements."

"You have determined, then, to go, Fenton?" asked the girl, quickly.

"Yes; I could not resist the temptation. I am anxious to see Miss Fleming; rumor says she is very handsome."

These words were spoken most artlessly.

Myra Hoxley started and glanced at the speaker; but she controlled herself and simply ejaculated:

"Ah! And who said Madeleine Fleming was pretty?"

"Why you, yourself, said that she was magnificent! Then, too, Stephen Smith, my chum, swears she—"

"Stephen Smith! Tut! The ungainly backwoodsman!"

"No, no, Myra," and the young man spoke warmly. "Steve is no backwoodsman; far from it. He is a real gentleman, a perfect cavalier, and a good, whole-souled fellow. But," he continued, seeing that the lady was evidently angry or vexed, at least, "is not the young lady—Miss Fleming—fair and amiable? I do not know, of course, never having seen her."

The collegian spoke more softly, more insinuatingly, as if inviting a confidence.

The manufacturer's daughter paused before she answered; and the half-frown unwrinkled itself, and left the white forehead.

"Some people say Madeleine Fleming is pretty; I have thought so, but—"

"You no longer have the same opinion, eh, Myra?" interrupted the young man, laughing.

"I did not say so, Fenton. But a truce to this nonsense! You shall see and judge for yourself," she answered.

"True, Myra; seeing is believing. But now about our arrangements. You see I have determined to go, and run the risk of being discovered out of my room."

"Are you not afraid of the risk, Fenton?" asked the girl, earnestly; "you know the stand you have taken, the fair name you have always won with the professors. Would it be wise to barter it away for a few hours of questionable pleasure at a giddy, empty ball?"

The girl spoke seriously, and her eyes did not for a moment leave the young man's face.

It was plain that a new train of thought was passing in Myra Hoxley's bosom.

"No, Myra; I will go. It will be my first offense, and I fancy the Regent will not be 'hard' on me. I can plead ignorance, too; I am only a Freshman, you know." He spoke cheerfully.

"True; nor had I forgotten it. But, Freshman or Senior, the rules are unmistakably the same. That you understand them well, I know to my sorrow; for I could never induce you, Fenton, to break them, even for a single evening!"

Myra spoke sarcastically.

The student felt the truth of her words; his face became beclouded, and a look of disappointment crept over his fine features. But glancing at her, he asked quickly:

"But, Myra, if I do not go with you what will you do for an escort?"

"That is easily arranged, Fenton. My cousin, Mr. Ralph Ross, of the Junior class, you know, has already called and notified me of his attention and service. He does not 'room' in college, as you are aware, and can come and go as suits him."

"True, Myra; and what did you say to Mr. Ross?" The student was just a little nervous as he asked the question.

"I told him I had an engagement with you, Fenton, and that I would not break it," replied the girl, frankly, gazing him full in the face.

Was there, indeed, a witchery about those flashing black eyes of Myra Hoxley—an irresistible charm in the girl's insinuating manner that made young Thorne look up so quickly, and reply so earnestly and eagerly?

"Then I will go, Myra, even if I am expelled from college for it!"

"The Fates forbid such a result! But," and she sunk her voice into a low, musical whisper, as her

eyes fell languishingly upon the fair, youthful face of the student, "does it give you pleasure to go with me, Fenton?"

"Certainly, Myra; else I would by all means—"

"Enough, Fenton! We'll go, and you shall be my escort," and again a triumphant fire flashed from the dark orbs of the girl.

Fenton Thorne had answered the best he knew how; in fact, the only way he could.

Myra patted the carpet slightly with her slipped foot. She was pondering; but she was a ready thinker, and pondered at nothing long.

"I suppose, Fenton," she said, slyly, "you are aware that my cousin, Ralph, is Madeleine Fleming's beau?"

"No, indeed! I did not know it, Myra," returned the young man, promptly;—and, excuse me—Myra, if rumor speaks truly, he is your beau," and the student blushed up to his eyes.

"My beau! Rumor is a wicked falsifier! Certainly you did not believe such a report, Fenton?" she asked.

"Why, I did not know, Myra; and Steve said that it was certainly—"

"No more of this Steve to me! He knows nothing of me soever, and I don't like him! There!"

"Then the rumor is false, Myra?" asked the collegian, not knowing what else to say.

"False as ever falsehood was!" was the prompt, impulsive answer.

"Then, Myra, I am indeed glad to hear it." The girl started joyfully. "For," continued the student, "I do not like Ralph Ross, although he is your cousin."

"Is that all?"

"Is not that enough, Myra? I tell you," he continued, energetically, "no woman would be made happy by wedding with such as Ralph Ross. He is a knave—I beg pardon, Myra!"

"There's no need, Fenton; but do not let Mr. Ross hear you say such a thing of him."

"Well, well, enough of him, Myra. I am glad he is not your beau, and sorry he stands in that relation to Miss Fleming. But now I must go," and as he spoke he arose, though the girl endeavored, ineffectually, to stay him.

"What time shall I call for you, Myra?"

"At nine o'clock, and don't fail me," was the answer.

"Never fear; I'll be here. Good-by."

"Good-by, Fenton."

The student flung his long cape over his shoulders, bowed himself out, and left the mansion. Turning to the left, he strode quickly back to the old college on the hill.

Myra Hoxley, queenly and proud, stood on the broad step at the front door, where she had said adieu to the collegian. Her nervous left hand clutched at the bell-pull. She did not regard the cutting blast which hurried along the almost deserted street and struck her slender form. She was watching the tall figure of Fenton Thorne, the Freshman.

She loved the student.

Then, at last, as she turned slowly about, and reluctantly closed the heavy walnut door, a cloud was on her dead-white brow, and a vindictive fire glistered in her dark eyes.

Myra Hoxley was jealous.

CHAPTER II.

LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT.

THE mantle of night had fallen upon the good city of Providence, but such a night!

The sky was inky-black, and scurrying squadrons of fleecy snow whirled through the deserted thoroughfare, and fled away like gray demons of darkness out over the slowly-losing, slowly-congealing waters of the Narraganset.

Here and there, flaring street-lamps flung their distorted beams; but, for the most part, a leaden gloom settled over every thing.

It was a night in which people love to stick by home and fireside, and devoutly thank Heaven that a roof above them, and thick walls around them, keep out the wild, wintry weather.

Alas! for the houseless, the homeless, the thin-clad, the outcast, on such a night!

Despite the intense darkness which glowered down on this old New England city, the hour was quite early.

The bright lights, sparkling and glowing steadily out on the night, from the many windows of University Hall and Hope College, showed that the noisy students were within doors, mayhap poring over algebraic abstrusities, and delving deep into Greek and Latin derivatives. Perhaps they were doing neither; most probably this *perhaps* was the truth.

Eight o'clock had just sounded from a neighboring belfry, when from the southern door of University Hall, fronting College street, a closely-muffled form stole silently out, and hurried away in the storm.

The form was that of a man and as he reached the large iron gate he paused.

"Well, I'm off, at all events!" he muttered, glancing back; "and Steve will be there, too! Confound the obstinate fellow! He might have staid, for he can easily fib to old 'Cax.' As it is, unless the open door, and the numerous books scattered lavishly about, will fool the good old man, we'll catch it, that's all! Whew! What a storm! What a wind! And yet, there are some people who don't heed it—don't—"

The rest of the student's mutterings was carried away by the mad blasts, which tore up the street.

Wrapping the proverbial college shawl around him well, the young man turned at once and took his way up Prospect street.

Fenton Thorne was on his way to keep his engage-

ment with the stately Myra Hoxley, the manufacturer's daughter.

Despite the unpropitious weather, its trooping winds whirling battalions of snow, the princely mansion of Arthur Fleming, Esq., the old merchant, glowed in brilliant illumination from top to bottom.

And why should it not? What cared the rich old tea-merchant for the storm without, when within his royal residence there was such a surfeit of richness, abundance and cheer?

This eventful December night, the 18th, of the year 1853, was the birth-night of the apple of his eye, his daughter, Madeleine—her seventeenth birthday—and the old father intended to celebrate the event with a happy and a grateful heart.

Madeleine Fleming was the joy and pride of the old man's life; she was the bright sun, which ever cast its warm rays over the father's wintry sky. She was his all! The ball to be given, this cold December night—this celebration to be observed—was to excel in splendor every previous similar occasion.

Carriages, with muffled, snow-clad drivers had been rolling up to the broad gateway, from an early hour of the evening; and flitting forms, in satins, silks and tarletans, had darted hurriedly to the ample hall-doors with their cheery light.

It was now near ten o'clock.

The large parlor shone resplendently under the two huge chandeliers, which flung their brilliant radiance over the room. Already there was a crush and a jam, the large apartment, in fact, being uncomfortably filled; for Arthur Fleming did nothing by halves. He had slighted none, and certainly one-half of the *élite* of Providence were there.

Diamonds flashed, rubies twinkled, and gorgeous dresses shone beneath the bright gaslight.

Madeleine Fleming, as she stood beside her proud father, in the center of the room, receiving the congratulations of her friends, was the cynosure of all eyes.

Well might she be. Tall, elegantly formed, rounded, active and graceful, modest, yet bashfully self-possessed; her clear, pearly cheeks at one time sporting the natural tints of health and high spirits; at another, suffused and crimsoning, as she bowed to the warm congratulations of some ardent masculine admirer.

Still the pressing throng crowded in, and carriages emptied their precious loads, and rattled away to more congenial quarters.

Suddenly a fresh batch of guests arrived, crowding their way into the densely-packed room. Slowly they proceeded, and at last stood beneath the full glare of the chandelier.

Myra Hoxley, arrayed in all the splendor and glitter which an almost unlimited command of money could give her, stood there, leaning on the arm of Fenton Thorne, the young collegian.

The student's cheek was aglow with excitement. His rich raven hair was flung back so that it fell back over his shoulders, and his large brown eyes sparkled as he glanced around him.

And Myra, her midnight tresses gathered away from her pale, thin face and forehead, in heavy coils, sparkling with precious stones, her piercing, jet-black eyes flashing around her, looked a very queen of pride and scorn.

Myra Hoxley knew well the dazzling beauty of Madeleine Fleming, and she had reason to fear that Fenton Thorne would not prove insensible to it. It behooved her to make a grand appearance herself on this particular night; and she did it.

As the two stood for a moment, beneath the chandelier, they were approached by two gentlemen, from different quarters of the room. They were arrayed in the height of fashion. As they drew near they bowed.

"How fare you, cousin?" asked Ralph Ross, a short, burly man, rather abruptly, and completely unconcerned.

"Well, quite well, thank you, Ralph," and the manufacturer's daughter half turned from her cousin to meet, to her, the no less disagreeable, but far more respectful greeting of Stephen Smith.

A few commonplace remarks were passed, as the group lingered there for a moment; then they turned toward the fair young creature in whose honor the ball was given.

As Fenton Thorne's gaze fell on the dazzling face and figure of Madeleine Fleming, he paused involuntarily.

"Good heavens! How beautiful!" he muttered, in a loud whisper of undisguised admiration.

"Sh! sh! Fent., my boy! Not so loud, though I'll not contradict your assertion," whispered Stephen Smith, who stood close behind.

The Freshman started slightly, and, without remark, moved on.

Myra Hoxley had heard that unguarded expression; she had felt the sudden tremor of the strong arm, on which she was leaning, and she had heard, too, the Kentuckian's warning whisper. An angry, envious thrill shot through her bosom, and she bit her short under lip, until the sharp, pearl-like tooth had almost found the coursing blood.

But she controlled herself; and walked steadily on.

CHAPTER III.

SHINE AND SHADOW.

FENTON THORNE'S words had fallen, likewise, on other ears than those of the impetuous, jealous Myra and Stephen Smith.

Ralph Ross had recorded each syllable in his memory, and had already registered in his mind a vow of hate against him who had given such utterance to his thoughts.

But, in another moment, the party stood before the old merchant and his daughter.

As Madeleine lifted her soft hazel eyes to meet the

salutation of the student, she started, her face colored, and she cast down her gaze. There was a wild flutter at the maiden's heart, as the collegian's mellow tones fell on her ear.

She knew not what she said in reply, and she scarcely noticed Ralph Ross at all; though to Stephen Smith she cordially held out her ungloved right hand; and she kissed the queenly Myra, with a sister's warmth and freedom.

But there was no warmth in return from the lips of the manufacturer's daughter.

Had Myra Hoxley searched her own heart, at that moment, she would have known that she only wished her lips had been wet with the poison of asps.

"Thorne, Thorne! I've heard of you, my young sir, and am glad to know you," said old Mr. Fleming, brusquely, but kindly. "I knew your father, sir, years ago in college, and I am pleased to welcome his son at my house."

"Thank you, thank you kindly, Mr. Fleming," was all the student could say, as an awkward blush spread over his face, and a telltale tremor crept into his speech.

"Ay, my young sir! And here, Madeleine—here, my boy; give her your arm. Take it, I say, Madeleine! This stupid reception business is now about over, and I am heartily glad of it. Now, Madeleine, show Mr. Thorne over the house—the library—the conservatory, and so on; and mark you well, Madeleine, see that he gets enough to eat—ha! ha! You see, Mr. Thorne, I have not forgotten old times and college commons—ha! ha!" and the hospitable old gentleman ended his long talk, with a whole-souled, hearty laugh.

Fenton Thorne's face was like a furnace; he felt Myra's nervous arm tremble in his, as she half withdrew and then replaced it, as if determined to assert priority of possession. The young man saw the extreme awkwardness of his position; and Madeleine appeared as if she wished the floor would open and engulf her.

"Excuse me, Mr. Fleming," stammered the young man, "you see I—I am already engaged, and—"

"Tut! tut! that matters not! Miss Hoxley will readily release you, for a time. Here, Mr. Smith, or you, Mr. Ross, escort Miss Hoxley, while Madeleine will do the hostess with Mr. Fenton Thorne, the son of my old classmate and friend!"

As for Stephen Smith, the Kentuckian, he was, at that moment, most intensely busying himself in looking in an entirely different direction; of course he most irreverently unheeded the old gentleman's command.

Mr. Ross, however, stepped promptly forward, and said, half-sneeringly, to young Thorne:

"I'll relieve you, sir. Come, Myra!" and drawing her arm rather rudely in his, he turned abruptly and walked away.

In another moment, the round arm of Madeleine Fleming lay in Fenton Thorne's, and the noble-looking couple glided gracefully away amid the throng.

Stephen Smith had already mingled familiarly in the assembly, and was now in earnest discourse with some fellow-students, who, like himself, having been favored with invitations to the ball, had run the risk of being demerited, for absence from rooms, in study-hours.

The moments, and the hours, sped by. Mirth, hilarity, and hearty good-feeling were gushing forth on all sides.

Once in the course of the evening, when standing near an *etagere*, and entirely alone, a dark, anxious cloud had passed over old Arthur Fleming's face.

"And next year!" he had muttered. "Will I then—"

His voice sunk into a whisper, and was inaudible. "And so old Welcome Hoxley allows his daughter to come to my house, and—stays away himself! Well, well, we were never friends, and he bears faithful remembrance of old grudges. Let him do so; I am none such! Ah! Mr. Smith, glad to come across you; hope you are enjoying yourself?"

"Famously, my good sir, famously!" But there was a shade, too, on the student's brow.

The old man and the young walked away, arm in arm.

CHAPTER IV.

HEARTS AND DIAMONDS.

THE hour was waxing late, but still the ball went on. At half-past eleven the doors to the spacious dining-hall were thrown open, and a magnificent collation was served. Conspicuous at the head of the table stood Madeleine and her father; and near them, proud and triumphant, stood Fenton Thorne, the Freshman.

The youth seemed intoxicated with bliss, and his cup of pleasure was running over. Beyond a doubt, it was rude and ungallant in the young man to ignore the girl who had introduced him at the mansion, and through whose instrumentality, mainly, he had gained access there. It was not exactly in accordance with etiquette, and young Thorne knew it well enough. But then he could not exchange happiness for discontent—the sweet, silvery tones of Madeleine Fleming, breathing innocence, youth, guilelessness and, perhaps, a faint shadow of something else, for the passionate mutterings of Myra Hoxley, breathing anger, vexation and jealousy.

Fenton Thorne, though young in years, was yet a man in understanding, and though not an adept in society-craft, yet was not stupid. He could read human nature, at least, to a certain extent, and he saw, and had seen for weeks, that Myra Hoxley was not indifferent to him; that she was jealous of his movements—exact, too, as concerned her due quota of his time. Perhaps—and he had blushed and trembled as he thought it—perhaps she loved

him! He almost knew it. And then, Stephen Smith, the Junior, in his own quaint, independent way, had said: "Yes, Myra, the manufacturer's daughter, beyond a doubt, was 'sweet' on him!" Fenton knew well enough the meaning of this strange phrase, and he half believed it, as did his friend and chum, the dusky-faced Kentuckian.

But, at all events, Fenton Thorne had, as it were, turned his back on Myra Hoxley, whom he had escorted to the ball. He had willingly given her over to the tender mercies of whomsoever would take care of her, and he did not mind who that was.

During the serving of the refreshments, the Freshman, despite the vigorous advances of several obsequious, *pushing* young bloods, had managed to keep Madeleine to himself. Her every wish was to him a command, and he attended to her requests with the alacrity and servility of an ancient knight.

The old merchant's daughter seemed sufficiently pleased with her young knight, though no gay plumes nodded over his locks, and no corslet of steel girded his form.

It was plain to see—ay, the most unobservant could see—that Madeleine was happy; could see, too, that a new train of meditation, of small efforts at a new course of thinking, was going on in that youthful mind, however fragile and yielding the links which held together that chain of newly-awakened thought.

Once, nay, twice, during that eventful evening, had Ralph Ross, in his self-conceited, impudent manner, approached Madeleine, and, disregarding the slender form of the Freshman, save with a cold, contemptuous frown, endeavored to draw the maiden into conversation.

Fenton Thorne had noted that frown, the contemptuous deportment, and the blood boiled in his veins. He knew that Ross presumed on superior class-ship at college; presumed on the ancient, alleged ascendancy, rightful or otherwise, of a Junior to a Freshman. He fancied, too, that Ralph Ross presumed on the physical superiority of his own bulky frame over the slender yet sinewy *physique* of the Freshman.

However, Freshman or not, Fenton Thorne was a manly fellow, and always preserved his self-respect; and as he nervously clenched his right hand, and felt the muscles swelling and contracting under his coat-sleeve, he fancied himself the equal of his weightier and coarser rival.

Once, while at the refreshment table, Fenton had caught a glance of Myra Hoxley. She was standing alone, still as a statue, her eyes bent fixedly on him, as if they would burn him through.

She was pulling slowly, nervously, at one of her pearly gloves; but her eye was stony, her face bloodless. Stephen Smith was standing near her, and had evidently been endeavoring to draw her into a conversation.

This was true: Stephen Smith was a good-hearted fellow, though he did not like Myra, that was beyond a doubt. But he was a whole man, a thoroughbred gentleman, and he saw how indiscreetly, rudely, in fact, Fenton was acting. He pitied Myra; she was alone, for Ralph Ross had just left her, abruptly, as usual, to make up a set at whist.

So the young Kentuckian had drawn near her, with a smile on his lips and respect in his speech. But, while Myra did not smile upon him, she did not repel him. She dared not do so, for several reasons; the most cogent of which was, she did not like to appear in so large a company without an escort. But, between her and Stephen Smith there was no love, not even friendship.

She turned her stony stare at last from Fenton Thorne's face, and placing her jeweled wrist frankly in Stephen Smith's arm, walked grandly away with her new-found escort, who towered loftily and noble by her side.

Fenton was happy; he could not be jealous of Myra, and he saw through the policy of his friend Steve.

The refreshments were at last abandoned; then the merry sound of music swelled aloud in the large room; then, speedily, sets were formed, and soon the heavy floors were creaking to the measured tread and swing of the dance. Without knowing it, scarcely, Fenton Thorne found himself by the side of the blushing Madeleine, and then the dance began.

Looking up, the young Freshman's face was again scarlet, when he saw his *vis-a-vis*, Myra Hoxley, her partner being Ralph Ross. One mad glance from her eyes shot at him, and then she turned to the "swing corners."

Stephen Smith, the Kentuckian, stood by, with old Mr. Fleming, and looked on. His face was sad and serious. Suddenly he disappeared, and Fenton lost sight of him.

The dance ended. Weariness crept apace over the company. Furs and muffs, cloaks and shawls were again in requisition. Carriages were again crunching over the snow, and rolling up to the door. The guests were beginning to depart by scores.

Away around the large mansion, in gloom and quiet, was the conservatory, a large apartment, well filled with costly exotic and indigenous plants of every description. Suddenly, two forms glided slowly into this quiet room, and seated themselves on a rustic bench.

"Why, Myra," said the coarse voice of a man, "you are like a—silly-pated school-girl, to say the least! Everybody in the room has noticed your appearance to-night."

"And have I not occasion to be angry, Ralph Ross?" demanded the other, fiercely. "Have I not been neglected by this brainless boy—ay, insulted by him?"

"Well said, Myra; but the fellow was not so brainless as impudent. He deserved to have his ears pulled."

"And his ears should be pulled, had I a brother," she snapped out, significantly.

"Whew! a broad hint my fair cousin! But you know I'm a Junior, and this boy a Freshman. I can not forget caste!"

"Caste! fudge! However, I would not have you harm Fenton Thorne; he is misguided, he is captivated by—by that minx—that's all!"

"That minx! That's good, by Hercules!—a heathen celebrity, you know, Myra—"

"Tush! fool!" was the sharp answer to this.

"Nay, nay, cousin, deal not in such expletives; they are unnecessary, and I do not deserve them. Maybe I'll serve you by boxing this boy's ears; you know Madeleine is to be mine."

"Yours! why you do not care for her! You are after her money, and—and—I am afraid that Fenton loves her!"

"Money!" exclaimed the other, angrily, without noticing the latter part of her remark. "Money! ay! you have said it! And sweet, harmless, innocent cousin of mine! you are after money, too! You can not deceive me! Old Thorne, that boy's father, is a millionaire; he can buy old Welcome Hoxley, as rich as he is!"

For a moment there was a silence. It seemed that the manufacturer's proud daughter was endeavoring to control herself, so that she might answer calmly. At length she spoke, and her voice, though low, was steady and clear.

"You are right, Ralph; I confess it, for I can not conceal it from you. I do love money, and I would have Fenton Thorne's princely inheritance to be added to mine. But, before Heaven, I love him, love him at times madly; I can not deny it!"

"I would be ashamed, at least, so openly to admit it," said the man, with a coarse sneer. "But," he continued, as if struck with a sudden thought, "come, Myra, we'll enter into a league, offensive and defensive; we'll be allies."

"Ah!—go on, Ralph."

"Yes, I must marry Madeleine, though, I confess to you, I do not exactly love her. But I have sown wild oats in my time! The truth is, my exchequer is low, and the old governor's treasury has a hole in it. In other words, I want Madeleine for her money, though the girl is fair to look upon; and—yes, you want Fenton Thorne, the upstart, for money, too—and, for a little love stirred in."

The girl pondered for a moment. She was a bold soul, a daring schemer, though but eighteen years old.

"I'll agree, Ralph," she said; "I'll agree; we'll work together, and I'll be governed by you."

"Good! We must wean him from her, and *vice versa*. You do the former; I the latter. 'Poison her to him. I'll blast him to her.'"

"And your first move, Ralph?" asked the girl, in a deep, interested voice.

"I'll—yes, I'll just thrash that youngster, anyway, in a day or so; and—Hullo!—keep still—still as the grave, Myra; I hear—Ha! here they come!"

The two plotters sunk down behind a cluster of large orange-trees as Madeleine Fleming, leaning trustingly on the arm of Fenton Thorne, the collegian, slowly entered the quiet precincts.

"Oh, Mr. Thorne, they'll miss us! Come, let us be gone. I—I am afraid—"

"Afraid, Madeleine, Miss Madeleine—of me?"

"No, no, I do not mean—I—I do not know what I mean; but let us go—come!" and she endeavored to force him away.

"Stay one moment, Madeleine; I must call you such! I implore you, grant me *one* moment," he continued, in a warm, excited breath, as the girl still endeavored to move on. "I have but one word, Madeleine, to speak, and forgive me, my sweet girl, when I speak it! I love you, Madeleine! Oh! turn not away! I know I am bold, but—but I can not help it! Speak, Madeleine, but say not now, neither yea nor nay; simply tell me you will let me love you, and that you do not hate me!"

He paused for breath and awaited her answer.

Madeleine did not withdraw her hand from his impassioned grasp.

"Why, Mr. Thorne," she said, quite calmly, considering the circumstances, "rumor says that Myra Hoxley, the amiable and beautiful belle, is the chosen of your heart."

"Then rumor is—is most strangely at fault! Myra Hoxley! I do not even like her as a friend; she is bold—"

"Nay, there, Mr. Thorne; she is my friend. But, but I'll whisper a word in your ear."

She leaned over.

It was but three words that the maiden spoke, yet they made Fenton Thorne's hot blood leap like lightning through his veins.

"Enough, Madeleine, my angel! May Heaven bless you!"

"Then, come now, Fenton, we must be gone!"

They turned at once from the conservatory and bent their way toward the parlor, now being fast deserted.

Slowly Myra Hoxley and Ralph Ross arose from their hiding-place.

"What think you now, Myra?" asked Ross, in a whisper.

"Much, much, man! But come, call the carriage, and see me home; I feel faint." In another moment they had left the silent sleeping-chamber of the flowers.

Scarcely had they gone, when a tall form slowly reared itself from the gloom and stepped out into the middle of the room, through which streamed a broad flash of light from a distant street lamp. That light disclosed the dusky, brown face of Stephen Smith, the Kentuckian. He drew a deep, long whistle.

"I did not mean to eavesdrop," he said, softly,

"when I came here to get a breath of unadulterated oxygen; but—but, methinks I've heard secrets!"

He left the room and sought the parlor. He had but entered, however, when he met Fenton Thorne, wearing a perturbed, half-sheepish, half-repentant look.

"Why, Steve, I'm in a mess now! Myra has gone without me!"

"I do not blame her, nor can you," was the blunt reply. "But come, Fent, we must be off to the college. All the carriages are gone, and thanks to your muddling of affairs, we'll have to foot it all the way—a good mile and a half—a storm in your face, and two feet of snow under your pumps! ugh!"

They left the hospitable mansion and bent their way through the wind and snow, up to Benefit street, and thence down to the somber-looking college, and Stephen Smith opened his mouth to his friend only once on that long tramp, and then it was to say:

"There's a little game playing, Fent, my boy, a crump game—between hearts and diamonds!"

CHAPTER V.

STEPHEN SMITH'S LOVE-SCRAPE.

ON the night after the great ball in honor of Madeleine Fleming's birthday, Fenton Thorne and Stephen Smith, his chum, sat late in their cosy room, twenty-four, University Hall.

Study hours had passed—that is to say, the young men had turned resolutely away from the table, whereon lay piles of books, memoranda of algebraic calculations, torn envelopes, etc. The bright lamp, its rays now free to beam wheresoever they would, the shade being removed—shone cheerily around the room.

It was certainly very comfortable in old "Twenty-four, U. H.," however bleak and raw wailed the winds without.

Fenton Thorne's face wore a disturbed, uneasy expression, as if his mind had been grappling with some knotty question, and that the question had gotten the better of the mind.

Stephen Smith sat quietly by, apparently unconcerned, his long legs raised high above his head, his slippered feet resting on the edge of the mantle. The Kentuckian was lazily puffing away at a genuine "Powhatan," with a reed-wood stem, then, as now, a luxury. But, as the good fellow watched the curling festoons of blue smoke, floating above his head, it was easy to see he was not exactly easy in mind.

The friends had been earnestly conversing, and now, in the lull which ensued, they were *thinking*.

"Come, Fent, my boy, draw up by the stove; 'tis a stinging night outside, and these old sashes are not as tight as they might be."

Fenton drew his chair nearer, but spoke not a word. The young Kentuckian glanced around at him.

"Come, come, Fent, rouse yourself!"

"I am not asleep, Steve."

"You had as well be! But, come, don't let those matters disturb you, though there's no denying you have acted a little queer, a little *outré*, you know, my boy, and Myra Hoxley must think hard of you."

"I don't care a snap of my finger for her, Steve!"

"That's a step too far, my friend. You should respect her. Whatever Myra Hoxley may be, she is a woman, and occupies the position of a lady. Besides that, she and her father have been kind to you. Many a good dinner you have eaten at their table."

Stephen Smith spoke quietly and seriously.

"Pshaw, Steve! How irrational and silly you talk!" exclaimed Fenton Thorne, somewhat vexatiously.

"Shades of Euclid! I irrational and silly! And you a *Freshy*, Fent! By Jove, that's icy, ay, Arctic!" and the Kentuckian laughed low and good-naturedly.

"Pardon me, Steve; I did not mean to be rude, for—"

"I know it, my boy, I know it. I liked you, Fenton Thorne, from the day I first laid eyes on you. To save you from college tricks and annoyances I took you in with me. And, and, Fent, your face was good, and I wanted you for a friend."

The last words were spoken in a low, soft tone, as the Junior looked kindly upon his chum.

"Yes, yes, Steve, my good old fellow, and you *know* I love you," and the young man drew closer to his friend's side.

"I believe it, Fent, and that's enough for me. But," and he looked straight at the other, "you did wrong last night in slighting Myra Hoxley. I tried to warn you."

"I was wrong, Steve; I confess it. But I tell you, my friend, when I was under the influence of that angel's eyes, when I felt the warm, gushing presence of Madeleine Fleming, I could not tear myself away! There!"

Several moments passed in silence; but Stephen was in the humor of talking, in fact, he was communicative.

Suddenly he turned toward Fenton.

"Fent," he said, in a serious tone, his large eyes beaming frankly on his friend, "*you love Madeleine Fleming!*"

The Freshman started at the suddenness of the accusation; he colored viciously and stammered:

"No, no—"

"Don't deny it, Fent; your manner owns to the 'soft impeachment.' I say you love the maiden!"

"And who made you so smart, Steve?" asked the other, reddening, and attempting an evasion.

"I am *not* over smart, my boy; but I have eyes, and—I can see," was the significant reply.

"See! What did you see, Steve?" asked the Freshman, feverishly, evidently fearing and expecting a revelation.

"I saw—why I saw you constantly in the young lady's company—I saw your every gesture and movement, speaking admiration; I saw—"

"Enough, Steve! I stand confessed! Now shrive me; for I do love Madeleine Fleming with my whole heart and soul; I worship the ground she treads; I would even bottle the air she—"

"There, Fent! Enough! I am a Junior, you know, and allow some latitude of speech with Freshmen; so, permit me to say, my boy, that *you* are getting a trifle silly."

The Kentuckian's words were as pithy as his tone was dry.

"You have no heart, Steve, else you would not speak thus!" exclaimed the youth, passionately.

"What! I, Stephen Smith, of Kentucky, no heart! Spirit of my departed ancestry! But, joking aside, Fent, I *have* a heart—a warm heart, a heart filled with love for two—"

"Two, Steve? Why you deceitful—"

"Yes; I love *two* devotedly," said the Junior, quietly, as he watched the rings of smoke which floated from his mouth.

"Then you should be ashamed of yourself, Steve! Your conduct is not honest! *Two*, indeed! And may I be bold to ask who they are—these chosen two?"

"Certainly, and I'll answer."

"Well?"

"First, my dear old mother in Kentucky—God bless her! Second: Fenton Thorne, the Freshman, God bless him!" was the soft, almost inaudible reply.

"Dear, dear, Steve!" and the youth crept closer still to his friend, and took his hand affectionately, almost reverentially in his own.

But, Stephen Smith was himself again. "Go away, Fent," he muttered, "or you'll make me childish. But now, my friend, that you have confessed a secret to me, I suppose you can keep one *from* me?"

"Try me, Steve," was the quick reply.

"Well, Fent, I once had a love-scape, myself."

The Kentuckian spoke very calmly and carelessly as the blue smoke curled around his head.

"You, Steve? Why you never told me this before."

"I had no occasion to do so, and why should I tell you?"

"Because I trust you with all my secrets—every thing!"

"No you don't," said the Junior.

"At all events then, Steve, I try to do so," said Fenton, looking down.

"Keep on trying, Fent, and you will tell me—much more."

Fenton Thorne covertly turned his gaze on his friend's face and scanned it hurriedly, though closely. But Stephen Smith's swarthy visage was calm and innocent, and he was still watching the last feathery ring of smoke that circled above him.

"Well, tell me all about it, Steve; I want to hear every thing you know. I never dreamed of such a thing! Go on, old fellow; 'tis just half past ten, and I could sit up all night to hear *your* love-scapes."

"Could you, indeed? However, it takes but a few moments, and after all it may not interest you. Nevertheless, in view of certain circumstances, I thought I would tell you."

"Go on, good old Steve, and don't tantalize a fellow so!"

"All right. Listen, Fenton; but you are quite sure you would like to hear of this confounded love-scape of mine?"

"Of course, Steve; I am dying to hear it."

"Exactly. Well, one year ago, on my return to Providence after vacation, I became acquainted with a bewitching young creature, just sixteen—and a blonde. Oh! those soft blue eyes!"

"Yes, Steve; your taste was good. Madeleine's eyes are blue, too."

"Exactly, Fent; but don't interrupt me; I am getting sleepy. Well, I fell in love with this fairy, just as you have fallen in love. Ah! I was in love—*then!* At every opportunity, in and out of place, I waited on the girl. I neglected my studies, just as you are going to do, wrote poetry—the veriest trash! Oh! the fool that I was, and you'll be the same before you're cured. And finally—yes—I—she only sixteen, you know—I, I proposed!"

"Yes, yes, Steve; and what then?" and Fenton leaned over, anxiously, to get the answer.

"What then? Enough, truly, for me; for, thank my stars, I was restored once more to my senses, and managed by a late industry to remain in college."

"But, Steve, what are you talking about? Of course the girl said *yes*, and requested you to wait till you had graduated?"

Stephen Smith bent his head and pondered for a moment. Then looking up, he said, very quietly:

"If my memory serves me aright, the maiden answered, very distinctly, 'No.'"

"Oh! what a pity! what a pity!"

"You cannot mean it, Fent!" and a bright smile flashed over the Kentuckian's dusky visage.

"I do! The girl treated you meanly! She did not know you. But, Steve, her name?"

"You have seen her."

"Well, well, trust me a little further; her name, Steve, her name?"

"MADELEINE FLEMING."

Stephen Smith still smoked on, and watched the blue rings floating above him.

CHAPTER VI.

CONSPIRACY.

MYRA HOXLEY, by some enthusiastic admirers called the belle of Providence, was the only child of old Welcome Hoxley, the owner of one of the largest cotton-mills in the neighboring suburb of Olneyville.

Myra was very highly educated, having received her tuition at a celebrated seminary on College street, just a stone's throw from the university on the hill. She had just graduated, being only eighteen years old.

Fenton Thorne, the Freshman, was about nineteen years of age. The young man had entered college only two and a half months prior to his introduction to the reader.

When the young man first came to college, he bore letters from his father to old Mr. Hoxley, the manufacturer; hence his intimacy with the family on Prospect street.

Madeleine Fleming, like Myra Hoxley, was motherless; but she was blessed in having such a father as old Arthur Fleming, the retired tea-merchant.

There was no cordiality between Welcome Hoxley and Arthur Fleming, perhaps not the slightest goodwill, though their daughters were, seemingly, intimate and affectionate.

Of Stephen Smith and Ralph Ross the reader will learn more if he continue to the end of this veracious life history.

Welcome Hoxley, the manufacturer, walked, in an excited manner, up and down the limits of his elegant sitting-room. It was early evening. The gas had just been lighted, and tea had but now been served.

Myra, as usual in an elegant evening dress, sat near a sewing-table. She was leaning one elbow on the table, gazing abstractedly at the light needle-work before her. Occasionally she chewed viciously at her lip, while a scowl wrinkled her narrow, white forehead.

"Confound the boy! He was rude and insulting!" exclaimed the old man, suddenly, pausing and flinging himself into a large velvet-cushioned chair. "To be taken by the baby-face of Madeleine Fleming! Bah! I hate the name. I only regret, Myra, that I allowed you to attend the ball at this old Sir Absolute Everybody's house."

"I, too, father; then Fenton had not seen this siren."

"Siren! By Jove, you speak truly! She is a siren or a witch! But, then, Fenton, the booby! I thought he loved *you*?"

"I do not know, father; I thought the same. But Fenton Thorne is no booby."

"Ah, indeed? Then he is a rascal; you can choose for yourself! I tell you, Myra, this affair, this love-scape between these two young fools shall go no further; I have good reasons that it should stop *now*—at once."

"I say, amen, father."

"Do you love this boy faithfully, Myra? Do you love Fenton Thorne at all?" suddenly asked the old man, looking straight at his daughter.

But the girl did not reply at once. A slight crimsoning tinge flashed for a moment over her marble face, and then she answered:

"Yes, father; I love Fenton Thorne."

The words were calm and earnest.

"Do you love him solely for himself? Of course, my daughter, you know that old Thorne is a very Croesus?"

"I know it, father, and I love Fenton Thorne, first for his expected gold, second, and in a less degree, to cheat others, and for himself."

"Ah!" ejaculated the old man, with a self-satisfied chuckle, "that's right, Myra, that's right! Always have an eye open to the main chance. And, my daughter," here his voice sunk very low, "we must secure your aims, must arrange things, so that there can be no failure. I will aid you. This princely fortune must not be allowed to slip away from you; for I—I—need an *alliance*, just such a one as Fenton Thorne and his *thousands* would make. Let us see that no one can approach us unawares, and then, Myra, we will have a little confidential talk."

"Yes, father."

The old man arose, and going to the door, opened it and looked out into the hall. Then he closed the door, turned the key in the lock, and came back, drawing his chair, at the same time, close to Myra, who sat by the table.

"Myra," he began, in a low, excited tone, "we must spoil this little game at once; and hark you, girl, we must not scruple at the means."

His voice was harsh, almost menacing. But the girl was made of stern stuff; she was not apparently startled at the words of such dark import, or she had nerve enough to conceal it.

"I am listening, father, and respond ay to what you say," she answered, raising her lustrous black eyes to the old man's gaze.

That look revealed to the father that his daughter had the will to plot and execute any thing.

"I have every confidence in you, Myra. I will speak freely. We are working together—I for you, you for me—that is, indirectly, you know. And, my daughter, we can not afford to fail!"

"You are certainly in earnest, father," said the girl, quietly.

"It behooves me to be, my daughter. But in this sudden affair I am actuated by *two* motives."

"And those motives, father?"

"MONEY and REVENGE!"

"Revenge, father? You astonish me. Revenge. And upon whom?"

"Arthur Fleming; may Heaven curse him and his!" was the fierce answer.

Myra Hoxley started violently, and sat upright; her attention was now thoroughly aroused.

"What mean you, father?" at length she stammered.

"You are blind, Myra, to fail to see that between Arthur Fleming and myself there is no love lost."

"I have thought it, father."

"Now you know it. I despise the man, the ground he treads, the air he breathes! But, my daughter, you are old enough to be intrusted with a secret; I will tell you one."

"Yes, father; I am listening."

"Arthur Fleming and myself grew up together here in Providence. As far back as I can remember, we were rivals. We entered the same school; Fleming secured the prizes, ay, every one, on entrance. We went to college, and again Fleming was victorious, while I gained no honors. Time passed on, and, as fortune would have it, I fell in love with a white, pale-faced girl, a *doll baby*, with flaxen hair and blue eyes, the image, Myra, of Madeleine Fleming. Don't start. She loved me, so she said; but she falsified, as events proved. Accidentally Arthur Fleming—how I hate him—saw the girl, and, well, in a word, he married her. More than that, he secured that which I was mainly after, the girl's large fortune! We met—Fleming and myself—we quarreled. I slapped his face. He challenged me; a duel was fought, and, to-day, in wet weather, I feel my rival's pistol-ball here," and he placed his trembling, nervous hand on his shoulder.

"Nor was this all," continued the old man, after a pause; "for then came the great battle of life—the struggle for success, for money. Fleming was already rich, by his wife; and I—I—had a scanty patrimony. But, thank Heaven, I did succeed. Arthur Fleming and Welcome Hoxley are still secret foes and avowed rivals! Yet, Arthur Fleming is not as rich as he once was! There was a time when he owned a dozen as fine ships as ever sailed the seas. But now; and I—I, am the owner of the largest mills in Olneyville!"

But, those last words of the old manufacturer were not spoken triumphantly; there was a shade of doubt, of sadness, and a tinge of melancholy in the tones of Mr. Hoxley.

Myra, after listening to her father's story, sat still. Then she looked up and said:

"Well, father, our day of triumph must come! I must win Fenton Thorne from Madeleine Fleming—I must marry Fenton Thorne!"

"I say, amen, to that!"

"I'll triumph, father; I doubt it not. Ralph Ross is our ally, too, and—"

"Ralph Ross! He'd have been your husband, Myra, but he had no money!"

"Pshaw, father! I hate him, and— Ha! there's the bell."

Old Hoxley strode to the door and turned the key. Then he quietly resumed his seat.

A few moments, and the girl tapped on the panel. Then, without waiting, she opened the door and handed in a card.

Myra Hoxley's lip curled with scorn, as she glanced at the engraved bit of pasteboard.

"Tell the gentleman, Mary," she said, in a voice like ice, "that I am engaged, and not in the mood to receive him, of all visitors. Tell him my exact words, and here, give him back his card."

The girl stared, but, taking the card, bowed and left the room.

In a moment more, through the open door of the sitting room, old Hoxley and his daughter heard the heavy street door shut, and hasty steps hurrying away.

"The impudent fellow!" exclaimed Myra, bitterly. "Who was it, my daughter?"

"Fenton Thorne, the Freshman," was the laconic reply.

CHAPTER VII.

THE WAGER OF BATTLE.

Two days after the eventful ball, and the morning after the occurrences, as related in the foregoing chapter, Fenton Thorne sat in his room in college. He had just returned from chapel exercises, and was waiting now for the bell, to summon him to the recitation room.

Stephen Smith was striding vigorously up and down the chamber, book in hand, and making a worthy effort to conquer his lesson.

As usual, Stephen had postponed studying until the last moment.

The Kentuckian was not in good humor, for he had already missed more recitations than was exactly compatible with an honorable standing in his class.

At length he stopped and cast the text book, most emphatically, upon the table.

"There! Lay there! will you? I'll not get the headache, by cramming into the said head what it can not receive, and what it does not more than half believe!"

"Heigho! What's the matter, Steve?" asked Fenton, glancing around.

"Why, I don't know this stupid lesson; and, you are aware, that the old doctor never forgets me!"

"Cut the recitation, Steve," said the Freshman, suggestively.

"No, I thank you, not to-day! This is my last chance, and my 'list' is just *minus* one of notifying our respected 'Governor' of his hopeful's collegiate delinquencies. Thanks to the dog star, for you and I were both born under it, old 'Cax' found us out as I expected, on the night of the ball. Hence my full list. The snow-storm and Myra Hoxley—Hullo!" he exclaimed, as the door was suddenly opened, and a letter flung in.

"'Tis for you, Fent, a dropped letter, too," said Stephen, casting the sealed missive toward his friend.

The Freshman took the letter and glanced inquiringly at the strange superscription. Then, tearing open the envelope, he spread out the folded sheet, and began to read.

At first, his face crimsoned; then a deadly pallor passed over it, as he read on; he bit his lip furiously.

Really, it required but a moment to read that note; for, however weighty the contents, they were briefly given.

"'Tis nothing serious—no dispatch, I hope, Fent?" and the Kentuckian looked anxiously at his friend.

"Not exactly serious, Steve, but certainly very annoying. Read the letter yourself," and he handed the half-crushed missive over, to his friend.

Stephen Smith took it, and without ado read as follows:

"FENTON THORNE, *Freshman*:

"I do not generally waste my time on puppies, or dirty my boots by kicking a Freshman; but I take this (as the most convenient) means, to notify you, that unless you make ample apology to me, I dictate that apology—for the insults you have flung at Miss Myra Hoxley, by six p. m. this day, I shall be necessitated to trouble myself to the extent of administering to you a thrashing; all, on or before the time mentioned above. 'A word to the wise,' you know. Think a little and wisely, and be grateful for this advice; else expect to hear soon and disagreeably from,

"Yours, patronizingly,

"RALPH ROSS."

"The cur!" exclaimed Fenton, his face purple with passion; "if he dare lay a finger on me, I'll—"

"Yes, I know you will, Fent; but he must not lay a finger on you. Take my counsel, and do not notice this bully. Should it be necessary, I can take your part in this little affair. But, you shall make no apology, that's certain. Though I—Hello! there goes the bell, and I know-not ten lines in the lesson!"

The next moment, the Kentuckian, with an air of reckless determination, left the room and bent his way toward the recitation room.

The day wore away; the old weather-stained bell, from the cupola on University Hall, sounded the usual number of its *per diem* calls, and the hour was drawing near when the day's work would be over.

Twice, that day, Fenton Thorne had met his burly rival, Ross; but there had been no salutation between them. It was certain, however, that the Freshman returned the Junior's sneering, menacing glance, unflinchingly.

Another point was also well established: Fenton Thorne had made no apology.

The reader must not think that the young man was unwilling to make all due explanation, and apologies too, to Myra Hoxley, should they be needed. In fact, he had that for his object in calling at the manufacturer's mansion the night before. As the reader has seen, he was rudely repulsed, and he had no apology soever to make to Ralph Ross.

Six o'clock came; then half-past six. Stephen and Fenton were in their room, arranging their toilet before going to supper. Said toilet consisting in washing their hands and blacking their boots.

Suddenly a bold rap sounded on the door. Before an answer could be made, the door was opened, and the heavy figure of Ralph Ross stood there.

"Is this Fenton Thorne's room?" he asked, bluntly, peering into the dusky apartment.

The Freshman half arose, but Stephen Smith anticipated him by walking toward the door.

"No, sir, it is not," he said; "I hold priority of claim here, though I am content to share the room with my friend, Mr. Thorne."

"Ah! Thank you. Excuse me, sir, but I have a word or so to say to your friend, Mr. Thorne," and he pushed boldly by and entered the apartment.

Fenton Thorne arose promptly. "I am here, Mr. Ross," he said, quietly.

"So I see, my Freshmanic friend. I failed to get your apology by post, and have called to get it direct from your lips. In default of which latter, I will appoint with you a day whereon to administer to you a genteel thrashing. Let me hear from you, and be quick about it."

This was said in the iciest of tones.

"You are a blackguard, Ralph Ross! Begone from this room!" retorted the Freshman, trembling with passion, and he made a hasty stride forward. But the tall form of Stephen Smith stood promptly between the belligerents.

Ross had quickly thrown himself on the defensive. "Sh! sh! Fent, my boy, none of this here. As for you, Ralph Ross, I thought you were too old a collegian thus to stir up a broil."

"I care not; I simply desire to chastise that sleek-faced, moral youth. But as I see I can not do so here, I'll say to him, that I'll be by Roger Williams's Rock at sunset to-morrow afternoon. If he dare show his baby-face there, I'll slap it well for him!"

The Kentuckian's face was red with anger, as he answered, indignantly:

"Compared to you, sir, Fenton Thorne is a stripling; he shall not fight you. But mark you well, Ralph Ross—I will be there."

The bully was somewhat staggered at this; but he quickly recovered himself, and said with a sneer:

"Very good; if you are anxious for the honors of the birch, do me the kindness to make good your promise."

Without another word, he turned and strode away down the hall.

"I'll not fail you!" muttered Stephen Smith, gazing after him.

CHAPTER VIII.

FEELING THE POSITION.

MR. FLEMING and his pretty daughter, Madeleine, sat together in the library. Breakfast had passed rather quietly, rather sadly, too, for the old gentleman seemed, not exactly morose, but brooding, or—a better word—foreboding.

He was reading a morning paper, having just finished one and thrown it aside. As the old gentleman chewed at his cigar, it was not difficult to see that his mind was troubled, that he was cogitating deeply, and that his thoughts were wandering afar off.

Madeleine was sitting quietly by, sharpening a crayon pencil, preparatory to putting on a few finishing touches to a fancy sketch.

Suddenly the father laid aside the paper, with a half-impatient gesture.

"Madeleine," he said, quite seriously, "have you seen our young friend, Mr. Thorne, since the ball?"

The question was so sudden that the girl blushed deeply. The subject, however, might not have been foreign to Madeleine's thoughts. She recovered herself, and answered:

"No, papa; I have not."

"Is it not etiquette, my daughter, that he should have called? It was in my day; I remember well—"

"I don't know, papa," was the demure reply, as the girl bent over her crayon pencil and continued most assiduously to sharpen it.

"Yes, you do know, Madeleine," said the old man, in a low voice, looking straight at his daughter. "But, do you like Mr. Thorne, my child? There, don't redden so. I am your father, Madeleine; treat me and trust me as such, for I love you as my heart's blood."

The old merchant spoke very warmly; far more so than the occasion seemingly required.

Madeleine glanced at him, and in a moment her arms were around her father's neck.

"Yes, papa, dear papa! And I love you, papa, for I have no one else, you know."

The old man gazed kindly at her.

"No one, Madeleine? I am growing old, my child, and the dark shore lies not far beyond me. It will soon be in view. I would not leave you alone. But," and his tone changed to one lighter and less gloomy, "search your heart, Madeleine, and tell me if you do not like Fenton Thorne. Speak, my child—I am anxious to know."

The old man affected a tone of levity, but there was a reality, a sternness, a terrible anxiety in that tone.

The daughter noted well and quickly that pretended manner, and, as she wondered, a cloud drew apace over her heart.

But she answered, after a slight hesitancy:

"Yes, father, I will be honest with you. I do like Fent—Mr. Thorne," and her face crimsoned like a sunset sky, as she bended over her work, endeavoring to conceal the tell-tale blood mantling her cheeks.

"I am rejoiced to know this," said the old man, hastily and sincerely. "I like the lad, and I liked his father. We were fellow-students. I, by some hocus-pocus, secured the valedictory, and Dick Thorne, by real brain-work, the salutatory. I wonder why he did not send his boy to me, instead of to old Welcome Hoxley?"

"It may have been, papa, that old Mr. Thorne has had dealings with Welcome Hoxley, and of course—"

"You are right, Madeleine, quite right. And you are wondrous apt at bringing forward excuses, but you are right."

"Myra Hoxley told me what I have said, papa," put in Madeleine, quietly.

"Yes, my daughter. And this white-faced, red-lipped Myra has an eye on young Thorne; depend upon it."

"Pshaw, papa! Mr. Thorne does not care any thing for her; he told me so!" blurted the maiden, right out.

"Ah, indeed," and the old man arched his brows, while a genial smile broke over his hitherto sad face. "I am glad, very glad to hear it, Madeleine, for Myra Hoxley would make no man a good wife. But, Madeleine, write a note to Fenton Thorne, and request him, in my name, to come here this evening to tea."

The young girl blushed with a badly-concealed joy, and she drew out her portfolio at once. Suddenly she paused and laid her pen softly down.

"Will it look well, papa?" she asked, in a low voice. "Will it look well to request Mr. Thorne to come, when good manners should have made him call anyway? I am afraid that—"

"Ha! ha!" laughed the old man, interrupting her; "then, at last, you have found out that etiquette of old is etiquette to-day! However, Madeleine, we'll wave form and ceremony in this instance. I dare say, the young fellow has been doing penance, by order, of course, for being absent from college the other night. Write the note, Madeleine, and send it by John."

"Yes, papa."

In five minutes the note was written, and John dispatched with it, with instructions to place it in Mr. Thorne's own hands.

Fenton Thorne was walking anxiously up and down his room in University Hall; and so absorbed was he in thought that he did not heed the modest rap upon his door.

The students had just had an almost angry conference with Stephen Smith in regard to meeting Ralph Ross. Stephen had insisted that Fenton should pay no attention to the braggart—not to go near him; but that he, Steve, would see the fellow, and if he needed it, would give him a good whipping. Fenton,

of course, would not assent to this. Then the Kentuckian had become angry, and, in addition to his promised chastisement of Ralph Ross, threatened his friend, the obstinate Freshman, also with a drubbing.

This quarrel between the chums had been terminated only by the warning-bell, calling to recitation the class in chemistry. And Stephen Smith, who belonged to that class, in an angry mood, and not knowing the difference—or caring to know it—between a bi-basic salt and double-elective affinity, rushed out, with a final shake of his fist at Fenton.

But the rap was repeated:

The Freshman stepped to the door, and opened it. "A note for Mr. Fenton Thorne," said John, the serving-man.

"I am he; come in," said the student, receiving the missive. He opened it quickly, and read the few lines rapidly.

A smile, almost heavenly, rested on the collegian's face, as he refolded the note carefully, and placed it tenderly away in his writing-desk, there to be preserved as the most precious, the most idolized of his small stock of household gods.

But then, quick as a flash of lightning, an expression of pain flitted over the fresh young face of the student, and he bit his lip until the blood trickled down.

"I am to await an answer, sir," prompted the man.

"I know it, John; wait a moment," and seating himself by the table, he drew toward him writing materials.

"Confound it!" he muttered. "Was ever luck so bad?"

"Did you speak, sir?"

"Of nothing of importance, John."

The student began to write; but what he wrote did not satisfy him. He began again, and with like result. Then again, and yet once more.

Finally he succeeded in his efforts, and to his satisfaction. Folding the smooth sheet carefully, and with an eye to effect, he gave it reluctantly to John, who, with a respectful bow, backed out of the room, and left.

A half-hour from that time, the Freshman's note, or rather letter, lay open and half-crushed before Madeleine Fleming, on the table in the library.

As a specimen of its class, we will give the communication word by word. It ran thus:

"DEAR MISS MADELEINE:

"Your sweet little billet, extending to me an invitation to take tea at your father's hospitable mansion this evening, has been duly received and read—I think, thus far, about eight times. Miss Madeleine, it seems to me that all the evil deities of heathen mythology are arrayed, in offensive league, against me; for—and it gives me the headache and heart ache (?) to write it—I can not possibly go! You see matters stand thus: My chum, Stephen—I call him *Steve* (you know him)—and myself were caught out of our room on the night of the ball. The old Regent couldn't be deceived, despite our bright light, open door, and lavishness in display of text-books. So we have not been allowed to leave the college-grounds, except for meals, until to-day. Besides that, we got five demerits apiece—Steve securing an extra five for being too independent about the matter. You see, then, Miss Madeleine, why I have not called before. I did run a risk a night or so after the ball, but I had an important duty to attend to, which unluckily I failed to perform. But I am now free with the exception of one engagement for this very evening, made prior to the reception of your note. I can not break it. I will come, however, to-morrow evening, and every evening in the week if you want me! But, but, why you know, *Steve can't always come*. Yours, with esteem,

"FENTON THORNE."

"*'Steve can't always come!'*" The cunning rascal!" grunted the old merchant.

CHAPTER IX.

ROGER WILLIAMS'S ROCK AT SUNSET.

THE lengthening shadows of the great old college building, falling in grotesque lines on the "Campus," betokened the quickly closing day. The sun, red and flaming, had just gone down behind the dark belt of forest in the distance.

Fenton Thorne was somewhat nervous and excited, as he glanced at his watch, and then, out over the snow-covered common and waste land toward the west.

"Time to go!" he muttered, "and Steve shall not prevent me. Thank goodness he is in the laboratory, and has to stay there a half-hour yet."

In ten minutes more the young fellow, with rubbers over his boots, and closely wrapped in a heavy overcoat, his ears being protected by a fur cap, issued from the southern rear-door of University Hall. Cutting straight across the College Campus, he entered Waterman street.

Turning up this avenue, along which the cold north-west wind was blowing lustily, the student bent his stride toward the subjacent country.

To the rear of the city of Providence, or to the east, lying on a high bluff, is a huge boulder of granitic formation. It directly overhangs the romantic little stream of the Seekonk.

There is an old-time history connected with this bare, bold rock, against whose base the tiny, fretting waves of the river are wont to murmur and break in summer time.

The cliff is called *Roger Williams's Rock*, and time-honored tradition has it that this flinty stone was the first firm place, after his exile from Massachusetts, which received the footfall of the sturdy evangelist. 'Tis said that here the Narragansets on the shore greeted the Christian hero with the welcoming salutation of "WHAT CHEER! WHAT CHEER!"

Onward hurried Fenton Thorne, his vigorous steps crunching the crusty snow, the fleecy vapor floating back from his steaming mouth and nostrils. At length, his blood leaping in his veins, his face aglow with generous exercise, the young man paused and stood near the rock.

"Ha! Freshy, you are punctual! I hardly expected you," and as he spoke, Ralph Ross stepped from behind a ragged projection of the rock, and advanced toward him.

"I am not lacking, sir, when I am needed," was the gallant reply. "And now, Ralph Ross, what would you have of me?"

"Why, nothing from you, boy; but you must accept a slight *souvenir* from me in the shape of a flogging—something to make your memory green, especially when you are in the company of ladies!"

As he thus tauntingly spoke, he drew from beneath his overcoat a bundle of rods and advanced at once upon the Freshman.

"Stand back, Ralph Ross! Stand back, I say, or you'll rue the day you dared attempt such an outrage. Stand back, fellow! I can, and will protect myself!"

As he spoke, Fenton Thorne drew a small pistol from the breast-pocket of his overcoat.

Ross recoiled, but it was only for a moment. He suddenly dashed forward upon his youthful adversary; and, before Fenton Thorne could use his pistol, he was hurled backward.

The struggle was a desperate one, for Fenton Thorne quickly rallied and faced his burly foe. He was muscular, too, and courageous; in his own right he was a lion. But he was no match for the other, and in a moment or so he went down before the powerful fist of his brutal antagonist.

But in a minute, flying feet were heard, spurning the frozen snow, and in the twinkling of an eye, Stephen Smith, the Kentuckian—his dusky face burning with an angry flush, burst like a whirlwind upon the scene. In a second he hurled his heavy overcoat aside, and then flung himself between his fellow-friend and his foe.

"Hold, Ralph Ross!" he hissed, between his clenched teeth. "Turn to me, you big blackguard, and fight your equal!"

"Out of my way, you western negro-stealer! Get out—"

He did not finish the sentence.

With the bound of a tiger, Stephen Smith rushed upon him. The two strong men met in a fierce conflict. There was no backing out on either side. The advantage from the outset lay with the Kentuckian. Slowly he pressed his heavy antagonist backward.

In a moment the two stood struggling together on the very edge of the tall rock; in another, Ralph Ross flung his arms above his head, reeled and fell backward over the cliff.

But the frozen bosom of the Seekonk, with its protecting cushion of snow, received the falling man, and saved him from certain death.

For a moment the fellow lay stunned and bleeding upon the spectral snow; but then he began to shout lustily for help.

Stephen Smith, panting from exertion, peered over the rock at his fallen adversary, and his noble nature arose within him.

Rapidly he descended and soon stood by his foe.

"Get up, you bellowing boaster! Take your hat and be off with you!"

Then he helped the fellow to ascend the steep face of the rock, and turned him toward the city.

"Go, Ralph," he muttered. "Be wise, and—in a hurry!"

Ross waited for no second bidding, but left at once.

"Come, Fent; 'tis time to go."

CHAPTER X.

A SOLILOQUY AT MIDNIGHT.

TEN months, with the shifting panoramas incident to fleeting time, had passed, since the events narrated in the preceding chapter.

The affair between Fenton Thorne and Ralph Ross had blown over. Each of the parties engaged in the fracas had been promptly suspended for a month—of course the whole thing leaked out.

Ralph Ross had been badly injured by the fall, and that circumstance led to an investigation; the result being a complete discovery of the whole affair.

With Fenton Thorne, the month had flown rapidly and pleasantly. He did not consider that any disgrace was attached to him by his suspension. What pleased the young fellow much, was, that Madeleine seemed to think more of him for his conduct in the matter than before; and old Mr. Fleming candidly informed him that he admired him for his pluck!

Stephen Smith, during his month of suspension, had embraced a long-coveted opportunity and gone off to New Hampshire on a shooting expedition. And so the memorable month had passed.

The Freshman soon made up for lost time, and speedily regained his old class-standing. For many weeks the young man had kept away from the Hoxley mansion; he did not venture there again, uninvited, after his memorable rebuff.

The winter, with its frosts and snows, had passed away. Spring, with its outcropping verdure, had come and gone. Summer, with its blue skies and yellow harvest, had likewise vanished; and mellow autumn, with its ripened yields, and dropping leaves, had come.

In the long interim made by the hiatus of ten months, many events had happened in the lives of our characters, worthy, perhaps, of record, but we can not pause in this veracious heart-history further than to make brief reference to them.

Several weeks rolled by since Fenton Thorne had called, that evening, at the Hoxley mansion, and the

young man was fast becoming a stranger to the old manufacturer and his proud daughter. That Fenton did not love the fascinating Myra was very evident.

At length, however, a perfumed billet, written in elegant, chaste chirography, had reached the collegian. It was a cordial little letter, expressing much surprise at Fenton's absence, and breathing a warm feeling—too warm, the student thought—all the way through. It was signed, "*Affectionately, MYRA.*"

Fenton Thorne, however, went at once, and paid his respects. On this occasion Myra was all sunshine and smiles, and her father was more than ordinarily glad to see "Fenton, my lad."

The manufacturer's daughter was playing a deep game; the stake was well worth the winning, even though a desperate struggle was required to that end. Myra, too, was a wily diplomat, and she assiduously attacked young Thorne at his weakest points. She tickled his vanity, and appealed to his nobleness of nature, his scorn of all things low and mean.

Then she cautiously threw out feelers, *skirmishers* as it were, to learn his position concerning Madeleine.

Getting nothing satisfactory in return, the girl unblushingly attacked Madeleine's character.

This step had awakened in young Thorne a torrent of retort, and Myra, beaten and baffled, had retreated. But she was not as yet *entirely* defeated. The girl loved Fenton Thorne, and on more occasions than one she had let him know it most unequivocally.

At the residence of old Arthur Fleming Fenton had visited regularly and frequently. He knew he was ever welcome, and he liked to go there; for the hours flow rapidly by in the companionship of Madeleine and her father.

It is scarcely necessary to state that the collegian progressed well in love-matters, and strange to say, (or not,) at the expiration of two months from the time he laid eyes on Madeleine, he was solemnly pledged to her as her accepted lover; and he a beardless boy!

Fenton Thorne and Ralph Ross never recognized each other; though, singular as it may appear, Ross always spoke to Stephen Smith most cordially.

Late one night, and we resume the main thread of our story—that night a raw, moonless one in October—a single light burned bright and steady in the library of Arthur Fleming, Esq.

This was a rare occurrence; for one of the life-long rules of the old merchant was: "Early to bed, and early to rise."

It can not be denied that a somewhat singular change had come over old Mr. Fleming of late. Nor can we say "of late;" for, as far back as the evening of the great ball, it was noted that a shade of sadness rested on the old father's face.

Of late, however—that is for the last three months—Arthur Fleming had been like another man. He was morose, gloomy, taciturn, and—if such a thing were possible with him—ill-natured.

But to Madeleine he was ever kind, though he did not evince toward her the warm, yearning affection, as of old. His mind seemed to be wandering—his thoughts eternally going out from him.

At first, Madeleine had noted this with wonder; and then with sorrow. The maiden became sad, and longed, more than ever, for the coming of her young lover, whose presence would cheer up her drooping spirits, and chase her sorrows away.

On the raw night, above referred to, Arthur Fleming, in dressing-gown and slippers, strode nervously, meditatively, up and down the limits of his library. It was eleven o'clock, and all had retired to rest, save him who most needed it—the old man.

On the table in the center of the room, lay several large account-books, open. Heavy weights rested on certain pages. Around lay numerous small slips containing memoranda of calculations. A single burner from the heavy chandelier shed its rays over the apartment.

"I can not avert the impending disaster!" murmured the old man, in a low, agonizing voice. "Oh! 'tis hard to come down thus. And to think that I have so foolishly squandered away thousands on thousands! My conscience tells me I have striven, earnestly and honestly, to redeem my losses. Day and night have I worked and pored over this dreadful enigma; but all in vain! I have seen it coming day by day, hour by hour; and now it is almost upon me. When the great, threatening wave breaks, as it most assuredly will, unless, indeed, a miracle should stay it, poor Madeleine and myself will be forever whelmed beneath it! Poor, darling Madeleine; oh! that I could speak with you—could tell you my dread secret! But Fenton Thorne, ay! his father is rich—very rich! Oh! that such thoughts will come into my mind! No, no; I'll be honest still; I'll trust God, and die as I have thus far lived, honorable and upright! It is my last chance—my last move. I will do my utmost. I will raise money by secretly selling—selling—useless finery; and then the good old Rover must be my friend again! In her I will risk my all once more, and I will trust my old captain to the last! If this venture succeed, if the Rover should return to port, I—I—oh, God—I will be saved. If she fail to come back, I am forever ruined! No hope then—no—"

At that moment there was a loud, decided rattle at the library window, then a heavy fall, as if some one had leaped to the ground. In a few seconds hasty steps, speeding away, echoed in the merchant's ears.

The old man sprung to the window, and threw up the sash with a sudden, vigorous effort. The broad flash of light fell, in a long line, far out into the garden.

Arthur Fleming started violently and cowered back, as he saw a dim, grotesque figure hurrying toward the street.

"Ha! He here! But he did not hear me; he could not! Oh! no! no!"

CHAPTER XI.

LOVE AND LUCRE.

FENTON THORNE stood again on the broad marble steps of Welcome Hoxley's mansion; but as yet he had not pulled the bell. The young man paused, as if undecided. His face wore a vexed, distrustful look, as if his visit was prompted by business—certainly not by pleasure.

At last, however, he looked up, and with a quick, nervous jerk, pulled at the bell-knob. This time, as on a former occasion, he did not have to ring twice; for scarcely had the bell jingled, before flying feet were racing down-stairs, and then the door was opened by Myra in person.

The truth is, Myra Hoxley, for some moments, had been covertly, anxiously, watching the young man, as he stood, undecided, on the steps. She was seated at a front second-story window, the shutters half closed. But outside the window she had adroitly arranged two small mirrors, so that they would perfectly reflect all objects up and down the long, straight street, and all passing beneath them.

With heaving bosom and straining eyes, the girl had watched the student, and marked his indecision of manner. When he had seized the bell-pull, she sprung away, and with a half stifled cry of triumph, hurried down-stairs to meet him.

When the door opened, Myra was all sweetness, languor and smiles. Fenton Thorne started back involuntarily at the radiant, dazzling image before him. Myra Hoxley certainly was there, a beautiful creature, whatever of the serpent she may have concealed beneath her brilliant exterior. Fenton Thorne had never denied her a dangerous, fascinating beauty. At one time, too, he had felt the power of Myra's loveliness; but, since the bright form of Madeleine Fleming had flashed before him, the form and face of the manufacturer's daughter had faded away like a dream.

"Come in, Fenton; I am delighted to see you," and the girl extended her soft, white hand cordially. Fenton took that hand, with what feelings he did not exactly know. But he bowed low, and murmured some unintelligible and inaudible words.

In a few moments, they were seated in the parlor, near the comfortable register, with its grateful heat welling up. Myra at once entered into a lively conversation. She was an adept in the art (or science?) of entertaining, and she soon succeeded in arresting the student's attention and holding it.

But, for a long time, not one word of reference was made to Madeleine Fleming.

It may as well be mentioned here that the young girls were now strangers to each other.

But, gradually, and very adroitly, Myra managed her conversation so as to bring in the name of Madeleine. The collegian started; but quickly recovering himself, replied by asking:

"How is it, Myra, that you and Miss Fleming are never seen together nowadays? You were intimate once, you know."

Fenton innocently thought his secret was not known to Myra.

"Why, Fenton," returned the girl promptly, "I cannot exactly tell. I was once fond of Madeleine Fleming, but then—then—"

"What then, Myra?" queried the young man, half impatiently.

"Why, people change, Fenton, and I have reasons for changing—reasons for not liking the young lady," returned Myra, quietly, a red flush passing over her pale face.

"You have nothing against Made—Miss Fleming—I hope, Myra? No, you can have nothing! She is so pure—so heavenly—so—"

"You are warm in her praises, Fenton," interrupted Myra, a bitterness evident in her tones.

"I am truthful, Myra; that is all," replied the student, calmly, though a blush mantled his cheeks and forehead.

"Ah! indeed!" and now downright sarcasm spiced out in Myra's tones.

"Yes, I have known Miss Fleming for nearly twelve months, and I say but the truth, when I repeat that she is amiable, sweet, loving—"

"Granted! all granted!" interrupted the girl, hastily and nervously. "But you have known me for a longer time, and Fenton, dear Fenton, can you not allow to me the same good characteristics?"

As she spoke, Myra Hoxley leaned over, and placed her white, trembling hand on the collegian's shoulder.

Fenton Thorne started, and blushed like a woman. There was no mistaking those words—no misunderstanding that soft, insinuating tone, and what it all meant. The young man's face burned like a coal; but he managed to stammer out:

"Of course, of course, Myra, I think you are the same; but—"

"But, you do not like me as well as you do Madeleine Fleming! You do not love me?" and she gazed him in the face.

At that moment Fenton Thorne would have blessed the power which would have borne him to some lonely island of the seas. But he felt his position, and he appreciated it. He was under the eye of a curious and a jealous woman.

He rallied at length, and with a ghastly attempt at a smile, asked, falteringly:

"And who says this of me, Myra? Who says that I love Madeleine Fleming?"

"That question could be readily answered, by any one," and she gazed pertinaciously, yet softly, at him as she spoke.

"Nay, nay, Myra," responded the young man, half-banteringly, "you have not answered the question: Who says I love Madeleine Fleming?"

"I do, Fenton Thorne! And I speak the truth! Besides that, I say you are a silly boy, to pay court to such a girl."

Myra Hoxley's eyes flashed fire as she spoke, and those eyes were still fastened on the face of her guest.

"What mean you, Myra? What mean you? Speak, I say!" exclaimed the student, impulsively.

"I mean what I say; I will explain by saying—Madeleine Fleming falls in love with every new face; that her heart is changeable and callous; that her likes and dislikes vary as the wind shifts; that she has trifled already with a half-dozen others, even as she is trifling with you now!" and the girl still kept her eyes bent on the face of the student.

Fenton Thorne felt a rushing torrent dash into his face; his hands clutched nervously at his swaying watch-chain. But the youth controlled himself, and did not speak.

"Now, Fenton, dear Fenton!" and the beautiful girl drew still nearer to him; "since I have opened your eyes to facts—for, I reiterate, Madeleine cannot be trusted!—can you not put confidence in me? Nay, Fenton, do not interrupt me, for I have long sought this opportunity, and must speak. Do you know, Fenton, what the love of a true woman is?—do you know what it means?—the warm beating of a woman's bosom against your own! Oh! Fenton, trust me, when I tell you that such a woman is not Madeleine Fleming! But such a woman is—ah! Fenton, forgive me!—is—MYRA HOXLEY!"

As she spoke, she sprung to her feet, and flung her arms impassionedly around the young man's neck.

Stunned, shocked, overwhelmed, and burning with shame—his emotions of indignation, of loathing and disgust, choking him and denying him utterance—Fenton Thorne—despite the fact that Myra Hoxley's arms were around his neck—staggered to his feet. With an impatient, violent gesture, the high-minded fellow flung the maiden from him.

"Shame on you, Myra Hoxley! Shame on you!" he exclaimed, in a deep, angry voice. "Yes, hang your head and weep! Shame on you! You cannot deceive me; I know you and your wiles! You wish my father's gold; but you will never touch it, Myra Hoxley! We are parted now, and forever! Thank Heaven for it! As for your words concerning Madeleine Fleming, I heed them not. I fling them back at you, and brand them as false—false as the wicked woman who spoke them!"

Turning at once, he snatched his hat and cape, and left the house.

"But you shall feel my power yet, proud boy; I swear it! I'll fight yet for that yellow gold, and—and—I hate you!"

Myra Hoxley fairly hissed these words, as she reared her splendidly-attired figure, and shook her clenched hand after the retreating form of the collegian.

CHAPTER XII.

THE NEWS RALPH ROSS TOLD.

By this time the shades of night had settled over the city of Providence. The street-lamps were already lighted, and were flinging their beams over the lonesome, silent thoroughfare.

The hours grew on; twilight deepened into night; ten o'clock sounded, and still Myra Hoxley, flashing in jewels, and rich in flowing drapery, walked with nervous step, the extended limits of the mansion parlor.

The light from the glittering chandelier was turned down low, and the mild beams falling on Myra Hoxley's stern, revengeful face, revealed that face fearfully distorted, and writhing with passion and jealousy.

An hour passed; another, and yet another. Still the manufacturer's daughter continued her restless promenade. Never once did the tightly-compressed lips open; for the woman's very soul, as well as speech, were locked up.

At last it seemed that nature was worn out. With a weary, half-angry sigh, Myra Hoxley flung herself into a chair, and burst into tears.

Her woman's nature, hard and stony as it was, had given way, but there came no relief. The girl was not defeated, nor had the fires of vengeance burned out in her soul.

"Oh, God!" she exclaimed bitterly; "and am I to be thus cheated out of my prize, my prey? Would to Heaven that Madeleine Fleming were dead and in her grave! But I will have you yet, Fenton Thorne, and have your gold! Compass and deceive me if you can, with your boy's wit! I have allies, willing and strong, and I am bold! I'll stay at nothing, now; I must not fail, for the prize is princely! I care not for—"

At that moment the door of the parlor opened, and the form of old Welcome Hoxley appeared.

"Ah! Myra; I'm glad I have found you!" he exclaimed, as he entered, and seated himself near the girl. "I have searched the house for you."

"Well, you have found me, father, found me an angry, a miserable woman; but one who does not despair of gaining her point! For, where revenge, avarice and jealousy work together, the combination is strong—wondrous strong!"

"You speak strangely, my child."

"Do I father? Well, it matters not; you understand me, and what is better, I understand myself."

"Do not talk thus, Myra. I know that Fenton Thorne has been here; tell me in a word, what has happened."

"The fellow has been here, indeed! We have quarreled, and the impudent boy has rejected my

proffered love—spurned it. Oh! Heaven, stand by me!"

"What say you, Myra? Spurned you? By—"

"There, there, father; vow nothing, and do not perjure yourself! For you are only too good at making promises; you never keep them!" and the girl smiled scornfully.

The old man winced.

"You are cruel, Myra," he said, humbly; "you are unjust. God knows—"

"God knows nothing of you, father, save it be to your discredit!"

"Now, by Heaven!" and old Hoxley's face grew black with anger, "this is too much, even from a petted, pampered vixen as you are! I'll not submit to this intolerable impudence; so heed your words better."

The girl was abashed before the ominous frown and the threatening demeanor of the old man. She had gone too far; but she was still a strategist, and had vantage of position.

"Do not be angry at me, father," she said, in a low, repentant tone. "I spoke rashly, I confess; but I have been goaded beyond endurance this evening. I was jealous of our name, of your name, father—your reputation, and—and I forgot myself. But, pardon me, and listen to what I have to say; I want your counsel, for now, together, we must lay our plans of triumph and revenge!"

For nearly an hour, despite the lateness of the night, father and daughter conversed earnestly together in a low tone. Myra's revelation fell with a stunning force on the old man's ears, and he nervously clenched his hands together, as a bitter anathema escaped his lips.

At last the consultation ended, and father and daughter sat gazing abstractedly at the floor.

Suddenly hasty steps were heard echoing on the flagged sidewalk; they paused at the door of the manufacturer's mansion, and instantly the bell jingled.

"Who can it be?" muttered Mr. Hoxley, glancing at the clock; "it is after twelve o'clock!"

Again the bell sounded, as if pulled by an impatient hand.

Old Hoxley hurried to the door and opened it.

"Ah! Ralph! You, my good fellow? 'Tis late, you know, and it does not look well to—"

"'Tis not too late to be the bearer of good news! Let me in, or you'll have the police upon me, for a burglar."

He pushed the old man unceremoniously aside, and entered the hall.

"Yes, yes, Ralph. News, did you say? Yes, come in, my good fellow; 'tis not so late, after all. But, now, the news, the good news?"

"All in good time, uncle. Give me just a minute to get some air into my lungs. It is more than a step from here to the end of North Main street, and College street is steep!"

Ralph Ross was enjoying the impatience of the old man.

"Ah! Myra, my cousin; well met!" he exclaimed, as he entered the parlor and saw the resplendent form of the manufacturer's daughter.

"But the news, the good news?" suggested old Hoxley, nervously.

"I've not forgotten it, uncle, and you may spoil it by your impatience. But, listen," and in a low breath, he proceeded to impart his information.

The effect on Welcome Hoxley and his daughter was magical. The latter was the more demonstrative; she laughed hysterically, and was almost wild with joy.

"'Tis coming—coming!" she muttered, "and Heaven be thanked! Now, we will see, Fenton Thorne, if your love be so entirely disinterested; we will see if it can not be brought back to me!"

Old Hoxley walked the room with a buoyant, triumphant stride.

"You are right, Myra," he exclaimed. "But it has already come, ha! ha! Some people are looking far ahead; but, Welcome Hoxley's day is close at hand. Heaven bless the men who build ships! Ha! ha!"

The old manufacturer tottered to a chair, and sunk in it exhausted.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SCUD OFF VUE DE L'EAU.

"Yes, Steve, there is something strange going on at the Fleming mansion; Madeleine is not the same girl, and her father wears a sad, weary face."

"I have noticed it, Fent, and I can't exactly unravel the matter. It may be, you know, that the old gentleman has met with a pecuniary difficulty."

"I think not, Steve; Mr. Fleming is wealthy, and, if he tried to do so, he could hardly throw his money away."

Stephen Smith pondered for awhile, and then he answered, slowly:

"Perhaps! But, Fenton—excuse me—let me ask you a plain question: suppose Madeleine Fleming were a poor girl, what then, in your eyes, Fent?"

Fenton Thorne's face glowed darkly at first, and he glanced up, half-indignantly, at the calm, impenetrable face of his friend and chum.

"What then, Steve? Can you doubt me. I would love her and esteem her more than ever!"

"I thought as much, I knew as much, Fent, and—you are right. What will you do this afternoon? You know recitations are suspended, on account of the death of one of the trustees."

"I have invited Madeleine to take a sail with me to Vue de l'Eau. She has long desired to show me a small suburban retreat of her father's, about four miles down the bay. She hasn't been there for some years herself. We will have a delightful time, Steve. I have engaged the 'Bay State,' and, Steve,

there is room enough for you if you would like to go."

"I would like to go, Fent; but you are mistaken, my boy; there is *not* room for such an interloper as I!" and Stephen Smith laughed good-naturedly. He was living, for the nonce, over the past; he was thinking of the time when Madeleine Fleming was his Queen of Love and Beauty. But then, the half-sad expression passed away from his open, dusky face, and rising to his feet, he said:

"Well, Fent, come; let's take a stroll toward the asylum; I need exercise, and we can talk as we walk."

Fenton arose from the foot of the tree at which he had been reclining, and taking his friend's arm, the two strolled across the "Campus" and entered Hope street.

Scarcely had they gone, when Ralph Ross, who had been sitting under a tree not ten yards away, arose. He had heard every word. He chuckled to himself and rubbed his hands.

"A famous chance for fun! I am a good sailor, and if I mistake not, the 'Two Boys' is a heavier boat than the 'Bay State'! We'll see, we'll see!" he muttered, as he moved off.

He entered Waterman street, and passing Rhode Island Hall, turned into Benefit street and walked rapidly toward the wharves, in the lower part of the city.

The sun was about two hours high. A dark cloud-bank in the west had climbed up into the sky; the wind was coming out from over the land in light, moaning sighs; anon, with a fierce puff, simulating a gust. The sun, bright and warm, was just entering the edge of this cloud which was stretching up toward the zenith.

About half a mile below the lofty hotel at Vue de l'Eau, about sixty yards from the moaning, fretting margin of the bay, stood a neat little cottage with porches and a nice large yard around it. This little retreat was the property of Arthur Fleming, the ex-merchant, once, in the lifetime of his beloved wife, a constant resort every summer, when the hot sun drove the denizens of the city to seek the refreshing breezes of seaside and country.

Seated on the rustic bench near the porch, fronting on the bay, were Fenton Thorne and Madeleine Fleming. By the side of the little wharf, at the foot of the graveled walk-way, lay the stanch little yacht, the "Bay State," rocking up and down to the increasing swell, her cordage creaking and rattling, as the rising wind played cheerily through it. Long had the lovers sat there, in that quiet retreat, sanctified in its very quietude. Long and sweet, too, had been the conversation, and the reader need not be told the burden of their talk. Lower sunk the sun, now shining like a huge ball of molten iron, through the dun-colored cloud now coming up from the west. Higher sung the rising wind, and now hollow and sadly moaned the rolling billows as they chased one another rapidly and angrily in-shore.

"Ha!" exclaimed the young man, suddenly, as he arose to his feet, and hearkened to the ominous moan of wind and water. Then he glanced toward the threatening sky. "Come, Madeleine," he said in an excited manner, though he strove to conceal his agitation from her; "Come, darling, we must put off; we are going to have a little wind," and taking her hand in his, he ran briskly down to the wharf. The girl did not heed the signs of the coming elemental storm, for her faith in her lover's skill, his strong arm, his judgment and tact, were implicit.

"Why, Fenton, dear," she said, cheerfully, as she sprung with the aid of his hand to the deck of the tossing yacht, "I care not for a little wind! Let it blow, darling, I care not!"

"Nor would I, Madeleine, were I alone," returned the other, seriously, as he cast off the bowline of the boat. "Come, Madeleine, quick—be seated—there! Mind the boom; duck your head and—there she goes!"

The yacht's head slowly fell off, and then the large sail, catching the wind, filled beautifully, and the "Bay State" dashed away with a foaming bow.

On they flew, the wind rising higher and higher, the sea rolling more fearfully as they bore out on the bosom of the white-capped bay. Now, the flying spray struck the sharp bows of the yacht, and flew in feathery flakes far astern. Fenton took off his coat and flung it over Madeleine's shoulders. The girl clung closer to him, and, as she looked in his face, asked tremulously:

"Is there—any—danger, Fenton? Can you manage the boat?"

"Trust me, darling," was the prompt reply, though the young man's tone was very serious, as he continued: "but, Madeleine, the wind is heavy. I must reef the sail; the yacht cannot stand it. Seize hold of the tiller firmly; you can do it—with both hands—so! Hold it steady for five minutes and I'll relieve you."

The girl did as directed, and grasped the cracking tiller with a strong, nervous gripe.

The yacht was now bowling along at a fearful speed, burying her bows at every lunge in the seething waters around her; but she was well handled, and stanch withal, for she readily came up again to her work, and spurning the fleeing waters, darted onward.

Fenton Thorne worked like a hero; the bellying sail was reduced to a mere pocket handkerchief in size, as he returned silently and took the tiller again in his own hands. The boat did not now ship so much water, but she still held on her flying speed.

"See! we have company, Madeleine," suddenly exclaimed Fenton, glancing over his shoulder, as they cleared the near headland; "is the fellow crazy? He is carrying full canvas. By Jove! it's the 'Two Boys'! and standing this way. But, what does the

fool mean?" he suddenly exclaimed, rising to his feet and steadying himself by the tiller, as the "Bay State" plowed her greedy way along. "He'll cross our bows—and I cannot jibe or fall off! Lie low, Madeleine! Boat ahoy! Luff! or you'll be afoul of me! Luff—luff! I say!"

"Can't do it! My main sheet is adrift—my rudder jammed!" came back, in loud tones, from the rapidly advancing boat.

"Madeleine—oh! Madeleine—cling to me—quick!" cried the youth, as the other yacht, with bursting sail, bore like lightning down on them.

A moment, and they struck. The "Bay State" reeled, shook, rocked fearfully, and in a twinkling, lay on her side, the billows making a clean breach over her.

But the other yacht immediately tacked, as if handled by a ready hand, and bore away toward the now dusky city.

CHAPTER XIV.

A LIGHT IN SIGHT.

It was Ralph Ross who sat in the stern sheets of the "Two Boys" that squally afternoon and guided the rushing yacht, with a bold and steady hand.

It is true, that, as he came thundering across the fore-foot of the little "Bay State," his boat did indeed seem unmanageable; and the long main-sheet was whipping in the wind. But it would have seemed singular to a disinterested observer to notice how soon after the collision this truant main-sheet was hauled in; how the flying boat came so suddenly up in the wind!

It was singular, too, and it cannot be denied, that, when Ralph Ross saw the collision inevitable, he did not put his helm a-port, and bring his craft up in the wind. There was nothing to prevent this. He might have shipped a half-barrel of water in the maneuver, but he would have run no real risk; he would not have carried away a reef-point, or split a seam in his sail.

For the sake of humanity, however, we must believe that the young man could not avoid the collision, on account of the fugitive rope and the jammed rudder. Especially must we accept this explanation, as, after getting control of the whipping sheet, and the mastership, once more, of the rudder, he readily and skillfully wore ship, and commenced beating gallantly back toward the scene of the disaster.

He had hardly come about, however, and brought his boat close in the eye of the howling wind, when, suddenly, a white squall darted out from the land, blowing the tumbling snow-caps far and wide, like feathers in the air.

Ralph Ross was a good sailor; he had shown himself to be such, and, whatever were his intentions in returning to the spot where the collision had occurred, it is very certain he dared not wait for the squall to strike him. He jibed at once, at imminent danger of capsizing, and scudded away toward the city, the lights of which were now to be seen twinkling in the darkness, far ahead.

The man had left the unfortunates to their fate; perhaps he could not do otherwise. It could not, indeed, be expected that he would endeavor to fight his way back in the face of the scurrying squall.

The night deepened, and still there came no welcoming light, glancing over the troubled, tossing waters; no glimmer to cheer the lonely ones on the wreck, for the gallant "Bay State" was a wreck. Her large sail, wet and sogged through and through, held the craft flat on her broad-side; she could neither right herself or sink.

This was fortunate; for, besides affording a firm, sure support—which it would not have done, had it entirely capsized—it kept the rushing water clear from the hole which the heavy bow of the "Two Boys" had stove into her timbers.

When the boats had come in contact, and before the little "Bay State" had gone over, Fenton Thorne had sprung to Madeleine's side. The maiden's face was white with terror, but she had clung confidently around the sinewy form of him who was to her her all-in-all.

In another moment, a huge wave had struck them, and, in each other's embrace, they sunk beneath the mad waters. Then they arose, and for a time Fenton Thorne was a very Hercules.

There tossed the helpless yacht, drifting away from him. With one or two vigorous strokes the young man was in the midst of the floating rigging; in a moment his right arm was wound around a hal-yard. Then, with the wet fainting form of the girl secured in the encircling grasp of his left arm, the student slowly drew himself and his precious burden to the last.

At last he paused in his efforts; for a time, at least, he had saved Madeleine Fleming's life.

Then he spoke sweet words, encouragingly, in her ear, and pressed her dripping form close to his breast.

The only utterances Madeleine made then were: "Fenton—dear Fenton! Heaven be praised!"

There they clung that raw night, in the wind, and amid the waves, which were breaking over them at every surge. But Fenton Thorne was happy; nay, he was cheerful; for he had saved Madeleine from a watery grave, and she was now doubly dear to him.

The student was hatless and coatless, but he cared not for that, and he shook his proud head defiantly, as the rude wind flung his long hair, wildly, in his face.

Thus they drifted, and still they saw no welcoming light, no hope!

Further and further from shore the helpless yacht was carrying them. But just then—yes—a bright red light shot around the jutting spit ahead, and then a rocket flashed across the black sky; then another. Then came the heavy scream of a steamer's whis-

tle, booming over the rush of the waves and the roar of the wind.

Nearer the light! nearer the darting rockets! nearer the friendly whistle!

At last the dark, looming outlines of the steamer came dimly into view, her decks thronged; from those decks loud, anxious murmurs and halloes were borne over the waters.

The red lantern at the black bow flashed over the wrecked yacht, and then Fenton Thorne raised high his voice and sent forth a frenzied yell.

In a moment a cheer went up from a hundred throats on that dark steamer's decks. The paddles ceased to move, and the craft forged slowly ahead. Then the letters on her bright, glowing lantern shone out clear, and Fenton Thorne read the name: "CHICOPEE."

"Heaven be praised!" murmured the young man, and he would have slipped with his burden, from exhaustion, into the water, had not, at that moment, a sinewy hand grasped him with a vise-like gripe.

"Saved! saved!" echoed from the crowded steamer, as Madeleine Fleming and Fenton Thorne were lifted aboard.

And the hand that did this giant's task was that of Stephen Smith, the Kentuckian. And old Arthur Fleming, as he once more held his daughter to his bosom, sunk, fainting, on the deck of the steamer.

"I did my best to avert the disaster, and to save you," said Ralph Ross, advancing from the crowd; "but the main-sheet—"

"Villain and falsifier! And are *you* here?" exclaimed the coatless hero, Fenton Thorne, rushing toward the other.

"Sh! sh! Fent! Better thank Heaven that you and Madeleine are saved. Whatever this man did, he certainly was instrumental in saving your lives," and Stephen Smith's strong arm held his friend back.

But Myra Hoxley, stern and pale, by the saloon door, on the dark deck of the "Chicopee," said not a word.

CHAPTER XV.

LATE LIGHTS.

Two weeks had elapsed since the catastrophe in the bay. The excitement occasioned by the affair, and the suspicions it had awakened, were alike dying out.

Peculiar circumstances caused Fenton Thorne to let the matter of the carelessness of Ralph Ross—culpable or otherwise—pass, without further investigation; and Stephen Smith was the young man's adviser.

Time rolled on, and December had come—the month in which occurred the anniversary of Madeleine's birthday.

Old Arthur Fleming sat alone in his library. The windows were now well secured; for the old gentleman remembered the visit of old, of the nocturnal prowler.

With his head buried in his hands, the old man sat in his easy-chair. He uttered no word, but sat there, wrapt in his own dark thoughts—thinking, reasoning, dreaming hideous dreams, awake!

He was fighting life's battles over again, and the conflict was a terrible one.

The hours sped by unheeded; the clock on its alabaster pillars, ticked loud, and struck regularly, in silver, sonorous tones.

But Arthur Fleming, the retired merchant, thought on—dreamed on. Suddenly the old man looked around him, and then glanced at the clock.

"Yes, yes," he muttered, "I must do it! She is my all, my only love, my cherished idol!"

He reached over, after a moment's hesitation, and pulled the bell-cord. Several moments elapsed, when John appeared at the door, in answer to the summons, rubbing his eyes vigorously.

"Ah! John—sleepy? Well—send my daughter here."

"Why, Miss Madeleine, sir, has been to bed these two hours!" said the domestic, staring at his master.

The old man glanced at the clock again; then he muttered:

"Ah, yes! I forgot. Well, it does not matter; tell Martha to awaken her, and bid her come to me here. I must see her; she can sleep late in the morning." So spake the old father.

With a look of sleepy wonderment, John turned and left the apartment.

In ten minutes, Madeleine, hastily attired in an evening wrapper, her fair hair, loose and unfettered, falling over her shoulders, entered the room. There was a wondering, puzzled look upon her face.

"Well, father?" she asked, tremulously.

"Yes, my daughter; close the door—that to the entry likewise, and stuff a handkerchief in the key-hole."

"Why, father, what—"

"Do as I bid you, Madeleine; John is somewhat given to curiosity."

The maiden obeyed at once, and resumed her seat.

"Nearer, Madeleine," said the father.

The girl drew her chair close to his.

"Now, Madeleine, listen," said the old merchant, in a low tone, looking steadily at the girl, as her full, frank eyes were lifted, trustingly, to his face.

"I have a weighty secret to confide to you, my child. But, Madeleine, do you love—Fenton Thorne?"

The question was blunt and sudden, and the girl blushed deeply.

"Yes, father, I do," was her reply.

"Do you love him well enough to become his wife?" continued the old man, looking straight into her warm, blushing face.

"Yes, father, I—I believe I do; but we are both too young yet," was the reply, in a low, soft tone.

"True, true, my child!" exclaimed the old mer-

chant, in a disappointed tone. "But Fenton Thorne's father is very rich—Fenton will be in time!"

These words were spoken as if the speaker was communing with himself.

"What were you saying, papa?" asked the maiden, who had but imperfectly heard the words.

"Nothing of special importance, my child. But listen, Madeleine," and his voice suddenly assuming a strange, business-like tone, struck the maiden harshly. "Do not interrupt me, but listen well. People say and think that I am rich; you think the same, my child. Well, I have been rich; I have been worth my hundred thousands. Start not, Madeleine. I have been unfortunate, my daughter; I have been unwise in indorsing bad paper, and tonight, though I have been honest to the last, I am BANKRUPT. Speak not, my child; let me tell you all. I am ruined!—am so poor, indeed, that I can not celebrate your approaching birthday! This house which shelters us, and which is so princely in its apartments, is, in the eyes of law and right, the property of others! But listen, Madeleine, yet more. You remember the old Rover—my gallant tea-ship of other days, the one I retained of all my many when I was rich? Well, she was good-luck ship, and I kept her. Now, by bending every effort, I have gathered up a sum of money—not large, it is true—but it will serve. I intend to risk this money, every cent of it, in the Rover again! Do not interrupt me, Madeleine. I have seen Captain Kelson and told him my secret. 'Tis safe with him, my child. He consents willingly, even gladly, to make the trip for me; he has already secured his mates and a good crew. On the Rover now rests my last, my only hope. If she is successful, and in a year hence returns safe to port with a rich, glorious cargo, I—I shall be saved! But, oh, heavens! should she fail! No, no! She can not, must not, fail!"

It was two o'clock in the morning before that midnight conference was ended between father and daughter.

The policemen on their beats noted and watched the half-hidden light that night, which flashed through the crevices of the shutters of the Fleming mansion, and they shrugged their shoulders and wondered that the old merchant, now so rich, should thus invade the "wee sma' hours."

There were other lights, too, burning late that same night in the good city of Providence. One shone from a room—the snug little back sitting-room in Welcome Hoxley's mansion in Prospect street.

This light, too, was half-concealed, though some of its rays managed to struggle out in the dark night.

But that light shone more brightly on a singular group which took counsel together in that little back sitting-room of Welcome Hoxley, the manufacturer, than it did on the wondering policemen outside.

CHAPTER XVI. LATE WALKERS.

In the early part of the same evening, when such late lights were burning in the mansions of Arthur Fleming and Welcome Hoxley, Myra Hoxley and Ralph Ross walked, arm in arm, around the dark waters of the Cove.

The Cove is one of the objects to be seen in Providence. We need not describe this beautiful sheet of water, surrounded by its grateful shade trees, only to those who have never seen it. We will simply state that the Cove is a large, artificial lake, formed of the waters of the upper Narragansett. It is about a mile in circumference, it being an almost perfect circle. It is walled in, all around, by massive masonry, this being studded by an ornamental iron railing.

In winter the frozen surface of the Cove is jocund with the ringing steel; in summer, its placid bosom bears many love-laden barges in joyous, sportive contest.

It was early in the evening, the lamps on Westminster street had just been lighted; the large reflector in front of the "What Cheer" restaurant had but then flashed forth its cheerful rays on the crowded streets; but around the Cove no brilliant gas flung its gladsome beams. All was dark and gloomy.

Myra Hoxley and Ross had just cleared the shade of the immense depot and were walking with a rapid stride along the quiet path bordering directly on the Cove. Their conversation was earnest and unrestrained. At length they reached the little bridge, half-way around the Cove, and directly opposite the depot they halted.

"Come, Ralph," said Myra, as if tired and impatient, "come, let us sit down. We have arranged all well. I only hope the plan will not miscarry." She seated herself languidly on the rustic bench. Ralph Ross followed her example.

Only a moment passed in silence. "For the soul of me, Myra, I can not see how all this is going to benefit your cause! Since the revelation, you know, I have no longer any desire in that quarter! Not I!"

Myra mused before she answered. "You may not see it, Ralph, but—I can! And even should I not be benefited by it, why I'll enjoy a brief triumph, anyway. I can smile with satisfaction at the rage and anxiety of Fenton Thorne!"

"But that will not gain him to you, Myra." "I care not—yet—I do care! Alas! alas! sometimes, Ralph, I wish the "Bay State" and her passengers had gone to the bottom, both of them! Then this terrible struggle now going on in my breast, would at last be over!"

"Would that indeed be a satisfaction, Myra? Rather, is it not now a part of your existence, that

you may win the love of that upstart, Fenton Thorne?"

"He is no upstart, Ralph, though, I confess, I am beginning—just beginning, mind you!—to hate the fellow. He treats me with such cool contempt. And then, that forever-intermeddling friend of his, Stephen Smith—I despise the fellow! and—and, Ralph, you are strong and active; why do you not cane this brown-faced Kentuckian—for—my sake?"

Ralph had good reasons for not caning Stephen Smith, but he simply answered:

"Nonsense, nonsense, Myra! Smith has never—never harmed me, why should I interfere with him?"

"Is that your only reason, Ralph? However, let it pass! We must try our game! Madeleine Fleming must—well, you know what—for a time. Whether or not harm befall her, I care not! I have saved enough from my father's stinted pin-money to pay whatever expenses may be incurred. If we can manage this, why, I can see what may be done to gain Fenton Thorne."

"You mean Fenton Thorne's money, Myra?" said Ross, sarcastically. The girl did not even wince.

"As you will, Ralph," she said; "but that matters not. If this fails with the girl, I'll poison her to him, and I'll scruple at no means which promise success. What care I for reputation, veracity, fair-dealing, or anything else? Once arouse the girl's jealousy—I know what it is, Ralph—give her good grounds for this jealousy, and trust me for a love-sick woman's anger! Then all will be well!"

"I favor the other plan, any way, Myra; and Tim Smooth is wondrously like the fellow."

"In every thing save all that makes a man. But Tim Smooth, poor fool that he is, will still be useful to us, and we must use him. For a few paltry dollars he is ours!"

"Can he act his part?"

"Trust me for training him! But we will—" her voice sunk to a lower key, as a man's steps were heard approaching. Then a tall figure walked leisurely by. The walker did not observe the quiet sitters; if he did he chose not to notice them.

When he had passed, Myra turned to Ralph, and said, in a low voice:

"That was Stephen Smith, I am sure! I know his footfall—the meddlesome busybody!"

"Fortunate thing he did not hear us, Myra!" said Ross, with a feeling of relief.

"I care not for him! I defy him! But, Ralph, listen well again to your instructions. Remember, if all goes—" her voice again sunk into a low, inaudible, confidential whisper.

It was Stephen Smith who had walked by so leisurely; but when he was once out of earshot, the good fellow paused, and gave one of his peculiar low whistles; and then—yes, it must be confessed—he uttered a very forcible exclamation. Polite or otherwise, it seemed to relieve Stephen. That exclamation had not the faintest reference to Myra Hoxley or Ross; but then Stephen instantly strode on, by the depot, thence across to Westminster street, over the bridge up into College street; and his stride was not slow or halting.

Beyond a doubt, the young man was very serious. In a few moments he was hid beneath the heavy gloom of the trees bordering the narrow street. But Stephen Smith did not enter the college grounds.

The night wore on. The late lights were still burning in that little back sitting-room of the rich manufacturer.

Beyond a doubt, that was strange company for Welcome Hoxley, those two rough-looking men who sat with him around a table, engaged in anxious and evidently a very interesting conversation.

Welcome Hoxley, his face aglow, it seemed, with anticipated, prayed-for triumph, his hands jingling nervously the heavy seals of his watch-chain, stood at one end of the room, near the head of the table. His two visitors were conferring together.

At length they looked up; one of them said:

"Well, Mr. Hoxley, you can count on us, but first, sir, swear solemnly that whatever comes of this, our names will not be mentioned."

"I'll swear—I'll swear, my men, of course—of course!" said the old man, hastily.

After hunting about for a moment or so, he found a small Testament.

"I swear, by the Holy Evangelists, never to implicate either of you in the matter!" and he kissed the book without flinching.

"Very good, sir. We accept your terms, and we will gain your ends! Once gone, you shall never again hear of—"

"H'sh! 'sh! no names!" interrupted the old man, glancing around him nervously.

"You are cautious, sir, but you are wise. But now, sir, we'll sign the agreement, and then would like to handle the gold—the hush-money, sir."

Old Hoxley hesitated; but it was only a momentary hesitation. From a drawer in the table he took two papers.

"Sign both," he said, spreading them out on the table; "you two will keep one, I the other."

The men did as directed. Then the old manufacturer took from a safe a leathern bag of heavy weight, and slowly counted over the glittering pile, and then, with a half-sigh, shoved it toward the men. They quickly secured the money about their persons, and without a word took their hats and coarse overcoats, stole down the stairs, and noiselessly out into the street.

They hurriedly took their way down Prospect street, toward the southern wharves.

Scarcely had they gone twenty paces, when, directly opposite the Hoxley mansion a tall form slowly emerged from the gloom and followed on after.

On went the two mysterious men and the one who hung upon their footsteps. At last the wharves were reached.

Feeling around for awhile in the gloom, one of the men drew in by a painter a ship's small boat. They lost no time, but, jumping aboard, let drop the oars and pulled directly out into the bay.

A quarter of a mile from shore a stately ship, with tall and tapering spars, showed like a giant specter in the night. The man who had so persistently followed after the others paused.

"Strange—very strange!" he said; "the old—man keeps bad company, I am afraid!" and he turned to retrace his steps.

As he paused under a solitary lamp-light, the flickering beams revealed the very serious features of Stephen Smith, the Kentuckian.

CHAPTER XVII.

CLOUDS OVER THE HEART.

THAT Arthur Fleming was getting the Rover ready for sea created no especial surprise. The ship was his, and his affairs his own; no one had any thing to say about it.

There were those of course who thought this action on the part of the old man somewhat singular and strange; that, in his old age, and surrounded by his great wealth, Arthur Fleming should grow greedy again.

It was not unusual to send out a tea-ship; though, at the time of which we write, the trade with China and the East from Providence was slack, in fact, almost abandoned. It must not be forgotten, too, that Arthur Fleming had made his fortune thirty years prior to the opening date of our story.

The Rover was lying in the lower bay, just above Vue de l'Eau. She had been hauled on the sands, and her old copper sheathing scrubbed and patched, her gaping seams laid with oakum and pitch; and then she had been floated off again by an incoming tide. Her high, old-fashioned, but well-ried hull had received a new coat of paint; and her tall masts and tapering yards, bearing a new suit of sails, had been freshly scraped. Her provisions and water, with a small cargo of commodities, were already stowed; her officers and crew were aboard, and the stanch old craft was ready to try the dangers of the sea.

Old Captain Kelson, the weather-beaten skipper of the Rover, was readily admitted to the library of the Fleming mansion. Arthur Fleming was expecting him; he wanted to have a last talk over matters and to give his final instructions.

Captain Jack Kelson was a representative of the old-time sailor, bluff, hale, red-faced, courteous, confident, and thought quite well of himself, in a professional point of view. The old mariner was all aglow; for, fifteen years had elapsed since he had snuffed the salt-sea air from the deck of a ship. The old man thought he had retired for good, and that he would finish the remainder of his days, surrounded by home comforts and domestic joys.

Nevertheless it was with alacrity and genuine joy that the sailor responded to his old employer's request, to take his old ship—the Rover—to sea once more.

Mr. Fleming was seated in his large arm-chair, but arose as the stately old skipper unconcernedly entered the library.

"Glad to see you, captain, and as I suppose you wish to spend this, your last night, at home, I'll not keep you long."

"Bless your soul, sir!" returned the captain, bluntly, "I've told the old woman, and my house full of brats—dear brats, Heaven bless 'em! I've said good-by to 'em all, and I sleep on the Rover tonight! I never break an old custom, and this is one," and the skipper seated himself, as if perfectly at home.

"Then, it's all very good, captain; we can talk at our leisure. But, first, take a little wine, and then, having made out the papers, we'll have a talk." As he spoke, the merchant drew a decanter toward him. He was about pouring the rich red liquor into a cut-glass wine cup, when a noise was heard out by the rear window; then the cracking snap of a breaking twig.

Mr. Fleming sprung to the window, hurled open the shutters, and looked out. But the night was inky dark, and the old man could neither see nor hear any thing. He leaned out, and peered around in every direction. Then he took in his head, slowly lowered the sash, and returned to his seat.

"Do you fear listeners, sir?" asked the captain.

"Yes, no—that is, not exactly; but I have my reasons for being cautious. You, captain, and my daughter,"—the old man's voice trembled—"are all who possess my dreadful secret!"

"'Tis as safe with me, Mr. Fleming, as if I did not know it. I am aware of your situation, sir, and—I'm sorry for you!"

"Thank you! thank you!" murmured the poor merchant; "I know that you are sincere, captain—that you are an honest man. A stanch friend is rare nowadays, captain."

"As true as my name is Jack Kelson!"

There was a pause for some moments—the skipper occasionally sipping the generous wine, and Arthur Fleming, perturbed and uneasy, glancing over a pile of papers.

At length the old man looked up, "There they are, captain, all arranged," he said. "And now, is the Rover—God bless the old craft—is she all ready for the voyage, for any emergency? You know my all—my ALL—captain, is staked on her stanchness, and on your generosity and friendship," and he glanced half pleadingly at the face of Captain Kelson.

"The Rover, sir, can stand any gale that ever

howled over the ocean; and, as for me, why let it be sufficient that you have trusted me, and that my name is Jack Kelson!"

"True, captain, true. All will be well, all *must* be well, all *shall* be well, and my darling Madeleine *shall not* be poverty-stricken."

"Heaven grant that may never happen, Mr. Fleming; and—and, why the truth is, if old Jack Kelson is alive, Miss Madeleine will never be brought to that strait," and the old tar vigorously brushed a tear-drop from his rough, weather-tanned cheek.

"Bless you, my old and tried friend! May Heaven be ever kind to you!" and the merchant caught the old skipper by the hand, and wrung it fervently.

The two old men spoke together until a late hour of the night. Then they separated—the skipper taking his way toward the southern section of the city, in the direction of the wharves; and Arthur Fleming, with aching head and anxious, troubled heart, turning again to his papers on the table.

At last the old man arose.

"Yes!" he muttered. "'Tis my all; this mansion and the Rover, and yet, oh, God! *they are not mine!*"

No birth-night festivities now for poor Madeleine! No, no, we must leave this proud mansion! I foresaw the storm, and strove to avert it; I failed; and now, I am working for Madeleine! On the Rover I have risked my all; the old ship is freighted with all my hopes! Should she fail to return! Should some terrible gale—No, no! I'll not think it, I *cannot* think it! Jack Kelson says she is staunch, and—Fenton Thorne! ay! he will marry Madeleine, and the lad will have great piles of money! My child *shall not* come to want!"

With these incoherent mutterings, old Arthur Fleming sunk back in his chair.

For some moments he was motionless, moving neither hand nor foot. Then, gradually, the arms crossed over his chest; then they fell softly, slowly, by his side. The aged, aching head dropped forward, and the old father, forgetting his sorrows and troubles, which were weighing him down, sunk into a deep and dreamless slumber.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MADELEINE'S CHARITY-ERRAND.

At eleven o'clock next day, all was bustle—not confusion—on the decks of the Rover. Her anchor was already hove up, and a hawser had just been passed aboard from the "Canonicus," the steamer which was to tow the large ship down to the sea.

At exactly a quarter past eleven, the wheels of the tug revolved, the hawser tautened, and the good ship Rover followed her small conductor obediently, and glided smoothly away.

The tea-ship had fairly started on her long voyage, to end, whether prosperously or disastrously, no one could tell.

From the cupola of his towering mansion, Arthur Fleming and Madeleine watched through a glass, the large ship fading away.

Fenton Thorne, the collegian, stood by them.

Silently, turn by turn, father and daughter continued to gaze after the Rover, until the dark smoke from the chimney of the tug, and the towering spars of the great ship, were hid behind the heavily-wooded headland, far away toward Newport.

And the prayers of father and daughter went up in a united petition to Him who rules the storm, for the safety, success and return of the gallant old tea-ship.

But Fenton Thorne knew not the earnestness of these prayers.

That afternoon, at four o'clock, when just below Newport, the Rover cast off the friendly hawser, then let drop her own snow-white pinions to the rising wind. In an hour afterward, with a green, foaming sea before her, and a spanking breeze abaft, the old ship sped by Point Judith, and dashed away over the rolling, white-capped billows.

One week after the departure of the tea-ship, Madeleine Fleming received a letter, written in a miserable, scrawling chirography—a letter, whose contents she read and re-read, as she covertly scrutinized the ragged little urchin who brought the missive.

The girl hesitated for a while; her father was not at home, and she was, from necessity, her own counselor. But, though merely a maiden, yet the girl had a warm, tender woman's heart, and an ear ever open to the cry of the unfortunate, or the pleadings of charity.

She did not ponder long, but taking a slip of paper, hastily scribbled a few lines in pencil, and handed it to the little boy, giving him at the same time a few pennies to make glad his poor, forlorn heart.

When the child had gone, Madeleine returned to the library.

She had not paused to watch the little boy, and did not see the tall man at the neighboring corner, quietly call the messenger aside, and, slipping a bright half dollar in his hand, take the note—quickly read it, and return it to the boy, at the same time sending him on his way.

But Madeleine spread out that rude scrawl lying on the table, and perused it again. The maiden's face was troubled, as she folded the letter and placed it within her portfolio.

That communication was brief and touching. It ran thus:

"MISS FLEMING:

"A poor woman solicits your charity. I am suffering—almost starving, and have four little children depending upon me for support. I appeal to you, Miss Fleming, for aid. I have often seen and loved your sweet face; I know I could appeal to none more willing to help me. I do not ask for your alms, until you have *seen* me and my wretchedness, and have heard my hungry children erylng for bread.

Come and see me; you have nothing to fear, for innocence, coupled with such goodness, is its own safeguard. I have washing to do almost every day, but am at home in the evening. I *beg* you come and see me. I live on the Seekonk, in the first little house, a quarter of a mile below the Butler Asylum. *Please come!*

"Trustingly yours,

"MRS. MARY CHAPMAN."

Madeleine Fleming's reply to this appeal was what might have been expected of her. It consisted of only a few lines, and read thus:

"DEAR MADAM:

"Of course I'll come. I will bring with me something for your poor little children. Expect me early in the evening—*this* evening. I would be no Christian if I refused you.

"Truly yours,

"MADELEINE FLEMING."

The sun had just gone down that evening, when Madeleine Fleming walked hurriedly by the college and turned into Hope street. She continued out this thoroughfare at a rapid pace, until she had gone a considerable distance beyond the university. Then she struck directly across the common, at that time there, and pushed on her way toward the dark belt of woods, in which, half-hid, lay the Butler Asylum.

The young girl slackened not her step, despite the ominous twilight, which was settling down, but kept on along the lane, leading into the main highway.

Madeleine, however, was beginning to feel nervous, for the twilight was growing deeper; somber shadows were lying under the trees and in the fence corners, and the place was lonely and out-of-the-way.

No wonder that the young girl's heart beat quicker, as a footstep, rapidly following, fell suddenly on her ear.

Madeleine turned, and saw the tall figure of a man striding along after her. She hurried her pace.

The man promptly quickened his. Then the girl, in very terror, sprang forward into a run.

"Fear not, Miss Madeleine; it is I!" sung out a cheerful voice.

"Heaven be thanked! I am so glad it is you, Mr. Smith!" she continued, as the Kentuckian came up.

"Were you alarmed, Miss Madeleine?" asked the stalwart collegian, in his deep but pleasant voice.

"To tell the truth—yes; but, I am not *now*, Mr. Smith. I am so glad you have come!" The girl spoke frankly, artlessly.

For a moment a shade of poignant pain clouded Stephen Smith's face, but it was gone in a moment, and one of anxiety and suspicion took its place, as he glanced quickly around him.

"And where are you going, Miss Madeleine?" he asked, softly, after a pause. "Laden with a basket, too! Give it me," and he took the heavy basket.

"I am on a mission of mercy, Mr. Smith. A poor woman is living right here in the city, and she is *starving!*"

"Are you going to her house?"

"Yes; it is not far off now."

"With your permission, Miss Madeleine, I will accompany you," said the student. "I am somewhat charitable myself, *if people will let me be!* These last words were spoken a little grimly.

"Thank you, Mr. Smith; I am so glad you are with me."

Madeleine Fleming was a noble, trusting girl, and her faith in Stephen Smith was implicit.

The two had now left the highway and entered, as by directions in Miss Chapman's letter, a small by-path leading below the asylum.

Suddenly, but far in front of them, two forms flitted across the road. One was a female, as could be seen despite the gloom; the other was a man.

Further on, up this dark lane, a carriage stood, dimly visible in the evening glamour.

As the two persons cleared the road, Stephen Smith coughed aloud.

Almost instantly a small jet of flame leaped out ahead from the bushes, a bullet dashed the sand of the path, in the Kentuckian's face, and a sharp report rung out on the air.

But Stephen Smith did not start. He simply exclaimed:

"Look out there, or you'll shoot somebody!"

As he spoke, the figures emerged from the brush, and struck rapidly across the common.

Stephen Smith smiled to himself, but said nothing.

"That was a narrow escape, Mr. Smith," said Madeleine, trembling in every limb. "People should be more careful with firearms."

"The truth is, Miss Madeleine," replied the student, gravely, *some people don't care*; they should be taught better. But, come, where is the house of this poor woman? I do not see it."

"Nor I; and, Mr. Smith, I think I'll try again tomorrow. 'Tis dark now."

"You are wise, Miss Madeleine; we'll return. But you are tired; we'll see if that carriage yonder is engaged."

By this time Madeleine had trustingly slipped her arm into Stephen Smith's. The two walked toward the carriage.

"Are you engaged?" asked the Kentuckian of the driver, who was half-dozing on his seat.

"Yes; for the lady and gentleman," was the short reply.

"All right; we are here," said the student, promptly.

The driver stared at the answer, and the big basket, but simply adjusted his reins and asked:

"Where to?"

"Mr. Arthur Fleming's, North Main street," replied Stephen Smith, as he handed in his charge, and followed with the basket, himself.

"Very good, sir; I know the house." The driver cracked his whip, and they rolled away.

Madeleine wondered; her head seemed light—she almost fancied herself in a dream. But she said nothing.

Stephen Smith was unusually quiet; he was thinking.

Fifteen minutes passed, and the carriage which had been driven at a rapid rate, drew up before the entrance of the Fleming mansion.

Silently the student assisted the maiden to alight. Then he handed the driver some coins; the man, touching his hat at the unexpected bounty, for he had already been paid, drove away.

"Come in, Mr. Smith—do," pleaded Madeleine.

But the collegian excused himself, and after placing the basket within the gate, bowed, and strode away toward College street.

"You are euchered, Ralph Ross! I held too strong a hand; though, if the truth must be told, you're *knave* enough for a dozen packs! Strange, ay, *very* strange! You had better not been born, black-hearted villain, than to have raised your hand against my life!"

The student strode on.

CHAPTER XIX.

"WHAT THE STARS SAY."

"WELL, well, my good woman, that matters not! Tell me your price, and if reasonable, I will pay it."

"Nay, nay, miss; you're in a hurry, and—unreasonable. You ask a great deal at my hands. It will not do for me to engage in deception, else it may be denied to me to read what the stars say."

"Nonsense!" and the closely-veiled lady stamped her foot impatiently. "What care I *what* the stars say, and whether or not you can read them! I want your assistance; I will pay for it."

"But I tell you again," interrupted the other, decidedly, "that, unless your purposes are honest, you will fail!"

"Are they not honest?" exclaimed the veiled woman, angrily.

"'Tis no business of mine, and I know not," replied the old woman, calmly; "but I do know what is right."

"Tush! tush!" said the other; "you talk idly and not to the purpose. I'll not listen to your nonsense. Nay, do not interrupt me, for time is precious. I am here on *business*. Tell me what you demand for aiding me, and how much, in addition, for keeping a secret. Speak out; remember, business is business, and that the money will be easily earned."

The old woman leaned back, and casting her eyes aloft, seemed lost in some abstruse calculation.

Her face was a strange one—the old woman's—and contending passions were battling there.

But her visitor was getting impatient.

"Speak, madam!" she said, imperiously; "this can not require *much* thought."

The old woman slowly lowered her head.

"You are business-like, indeed!" she muttered, with a low, cackling laugh; "and I'll be as much so! Pay me twenty dollars in advance; you have my terms."

"Too much! Take ten—it overpays you; take it, or I go," and she turned toward the door.

"No, no; don't go. Wait a moment, and let me think. You're in too great a hurry."

"I'll not wait a minute," and the visitor laid her hand upon the knob.

"I'll accept your offer," gasped the old woman, quickly.

"Good!" said the other, as if expecting such a result; "I will come to-morrow, and make my arrangements."

Without another word, she whisked out of the room into the street, omitting even to say good-morning.

This singular conversation took place in a small house, standing in the rear of a tenement on North Main street, near the gates of the cemetery. The door of the small, retired, rear house, bore a large, old-fashioned brass plate. There was a name on that plate—a quaint, odd name.

Several weeks had now elapsed since the occurrence of the events as given in our last chapter; and the honored event in the aristocratic Fleming mansion—the birth-night of Madeleine—had passed uncelebrated.

Had it been forgotten?

The large house, on that usually auspicious evening, was closed; only one or two lights shone out from the huge pile, and they came from the dormitory of the servants.

The truth is, a week before the long-looked-for night, Arthur Fleming had told his daughter, with a sickly smile, a faint attempt at light-heartedness—for tears stood in his eyes—that he was—not exactly *tired* of celebrating those birth-nights; but he was afraid that *his guests* might tire of them!

Madeleine had bowed her head, and said nothing.

Her father had gone on to say that, therefore, instead of celebrating the occasion as of old, he and Madeleine would take a trip by rail, and have a winter view of Niagara Falls!

Madeleine had not raised the slightest objection to this plan; for she knew, though he failed to tell her in so many words, her father's reasons for this dark, midwinter journey.

The house, then, had been echoless and cheerless on this December evening. No flashing diamonds and gorgeous dresses, on this night, had passed beneath the radiance of the great chandeliers.

One week after the evening had passed, Arthur Fleming and his daughter returned—the old man seemingly happy, and Madeleine, too. The maiden, whatever were the clouds above her—somer or purple—was almost always happy. Fenton Thorne

was her idol and treasure; and she owned him still, in the face of all adversity.

Since the eventful evening when Stephen Smith had accompanied Madeleine in search of the widow Chapman's out-of-the-way and never-found cottage, the Kentuckian had called once. He only made a passing allusion to the circumstance; and he expressed no surprise whatever when the girl informed him that she had gone next day to look for the poor woman, but had failed again in finding her or her house.

Stephen dryly suggested that perhaps the poor woman was too obscure a personage to be known by any one! But the young man did not volunteer to hunt for the widow Chapman; and Madeleine thought it a little strange that he failed to do so.

Between Stephen Smith, however, and Ralph Ross, hot, angry words had passed; and had it not been for some students standing by, it is more than probable the young men had come to blows. One thing is certain, Ralph Ross avoided Stephen, and would never, if possible, meet him face to face.

As has been said, several weeks had passed. One morning Madeleine sat in her father's library, sad and listless; for Fenton Thorne, for some cause, had absented himself longer than was customary with him.

As the girl sat there, the bell suddenly rung, and a letter was handed in.

Carelessly the maiden took the missive, and glanced at the superscription. As the strange handwriting—evidently masculine—fell upon her sight, Madeleine started. It was directed to herself.

She hastily tore open the envelope, and, with feelings we will not attempt to describe, read as follows:

"MISS FLEMING:

"Pardon the presumption of which I am guilty, in addressing you. Though a stranger, yet, believe me, I am actuated solely, in writing to you, by the desire to do you a service. I know you by reputation and by sight; but have never spoken with you. But I do know him, personally, whom rumor says to be your accepted lover. I know FENTON THORNE!

"Pardon a few plain words, and though I sign no name to this communication, I beg you to accept my statements. I will be brief.

"Fenton Thorne is not true to you; he loves another woman; he has pledged his solemn troth to that woman; that woman is the rich and beautiful MYRA HOXLEY. The young man has heard it hinted that your father is not—excuse me, if I give you pain—is not as rich as report would have him. Of course there is no foundation for such a report; but you will see that it has had some weight with Mr. Fenton Thorne. He has transferred his affections to Myra Hoxley—a fine girl, Miss Fleming, we must all admit, and rich, beyond dispute. Fenton Thorne is rich, too; but he is selfish. From an old acquaintance, I speak as I do. He would not wed the prettiest and most amiable girl in Providence, and all agree that you are such, unless she brought him a large fortune. I do not ask you to believe me; but in order to satisfy your own mind, as to the falsity of this fellow's protestations to you, I ask you as you value your future happiness, to go and see a good old woman—a wise woman, living in the rear of No. — North Main street. You may not believe in clairvoyancy, or astrology, nor will we argue as to the merits of either; but go and see this old woman, who pretends at all events to be a clairvoyant, and a reader of the stars. If you disregard this advice, evil will come of it. Seek the old woman at once, and tell her your errand. She will then tell you what the stars say.

"A FRIEND."

The letter fell from Madeleine Fleming's hands, and a cold shiver passed over her frame. Her face at first flushed, and then grew as pale as death.

"Can it be true?" she moaned. "Oh, God! can I believe that Fenton Thorne is so false? No, no! But, Myra Hoxley! Alas! alas! . . . Nonsense! away doubts! I'll not distrust him. Oh! Fenton is mine, mine alone! Yet, this letter! Oh! Heaven! I'll go mad! . . . I must see this woman—I'll seek her now!"

CHAPTER XX.

WHAT MADELEINE HEARD AND SAW.

LATE on the same evening, Madeleine Fleming, unattended, issued stealthily from her father's mansion, and took her way up North Main street. She drew her cloak around her, and dropped her veil over her face.

No one paid special attention to the maiden, and no one knew her; for she brushed right against Stephen Smith, who was striding independently along, smoking a rather bad-flavored cigar.

Madeleine breathed freer; she had confidence in her disguise. She did not halt at all, but hurried along toward the house designated in the letter of warning.

She paused at the little dark alley, leading down to the dwelling, cast a rapid glance around her, and, without hesitating longer, boldly trod along the gloomy way. Ten paces on to the right, on the north side, she suddenly halted; for there on a dingy, narrow, dirt-begrimed door, was an old-fashioned brass-plate.

Madeleine leaned over, and by the uncertain, flaring light of an adjacent lamp, she managed to read on that plate:

"MADAME FELICE DUPLICITE, Clairvoyant."

The girl had gone too far now to retreat. Summoning all her resolution, she tapped lightly on the sooty panel.

There was no response.

Madeleine waited a minute, and rapped again.

Still no answer.

The girl's heart fluttered at the strange position in which she was placed; and, frightened at the

loneliness of the place, she was about hurrying away.

But then a faint light flashed over the transom-window of the door, and the bolt was turned.

A coarsely-clad negro woman stood there.

"What you want, missus?" she asked.

"Does Madame Duplicite live here?" asked Madeleine, tremblingly.

"Yes, she do; but you can't see her 'less you send in your name first; them's the Madame's orders."

"Very good then; my name is—Madeleine Fleming," said the young girl, in a low voice.

"Well, jest wait one minute, and I'll tell her."

The woman was gone but a moment, when she returned, saying:

"Walk in, Miss; the Madame was somewhat 'specting you."

Madeleine noticed the "Miss" in the woman's words, but without more ado, gathered her skirts closely around her and entered the house.

Down a narrow passage, through a dingy, unlighted room, then up a rickety staircase, then straight on, in a still narrower passageway, and at last the woman paused before a door. Madeleine had followed close behind her.

In this hall-way a bright light was burning, and Madeleine saw that the door before which she and her guide had paused was entirely covered with queer, cabalistic characters.

The woman rapped boldly on the door. Instantly a sharp, querulous voice inside responded:

"Come in!"

Then the negress gently opened the door, and pushed Madeleine forward into the room.

Seated before a table, on which lay a human skull, an hour-glass, and a well-thumbed chart of the heavenly bodies, was a thin old woman, with long, gray, elfin locks, and a dark, scarred face. Behind a pair of old-time horn-rimmed spectacles flashed a pair of piercing black eyes.

The old woman's form was bent and bowed. She seemed, at least, seventy years of age.

"Well, Madeleine Fleming, what would you have of me—the old clairvoyant?"

Madeleine was startled at the sharp, shrill voice, but she answered at once—for where a woman's heart is interested, she can speak.

"I'll tell you in a few words, Madame," she stammered, in low, hesitating tones. "I received a letter to-day from some unknown source, telling me—that—that my lover was false to me! It also told me—this letter—that you could tell me more of him. I am come!" and the poor girl gazed anxiously at the old, wrinkled, tawny face before her.

"Ah!" ejaculated the old creature, with something like a chuckle, "I can tell you of any thing, girl! But before these lips are opened, tell me your age, and drop gold into my palm; a half-eagle, too, or I speak not!"

Silently, tremblingly, Madeleine drew a golden coin from her pocket, and let it fall into the woman's open palm.

The fingers of that hand did not close greedily upon the precious metal; they simply shut on it. Then the money was quietly transferred to some receptacle beneath the old hag's girdle.

"Good, my girl! Now interrupt me not, but listen."

For several moments the old clairvoyant bent her head over the table, and muttered to herself incoherent, inaudible sentences.

At length she raised her head.

"Listen, Madeleine Fleming!" she began, in a solemn, measured voice. "Heed well the words of one who sees clear! You once had a lover; nay, nay, so soon to interrupt me! His name—Fenton Thorne, a student then and now—"

Madeleine started violently, and tottered backward; but she recovered herself.

"He loves you no longer!" continued the old soothsayer. "He heard rumors, true rumors, Madeleine Fleming, of your father's embarrassments. Start not, my child, for all this is locked in my bosom."

"The young man has turned his thoughts to the richer, and no less lovely, Myra Hoxley. Nay, nay, give not way; bear up, my child. For, after all, this may be for you a good riddance. If the youth, for money, be false to one, will he not be the same to the other? Now listen: this night, at nine o'clock, stand on the opposite side of the street from the Hoxley mansion. Look through the blazing window, and you will see Fenton Thorne holding the hand of Myra Hoxley in a mimic marriage ceremony. A mock-marriage, soon to be followed by genuine bands of wedlock! Go, Madeleine Fleming, and see for yourself the perfidy of this man; and seeing, be a wiser woman. Adieu, my child, for the stars say no more."

Blinded, stunned and scarcely breathing, Madeleine Fleming staggered helplessly down-stairs—then out into the cold, desolate, rayless street.

Twilight had long since deepened into night, and the moon had sunk beneath the cumulous clouds in the west.

Eight o'clock came, half-past eight; and at nine—hidden under the heavy shades of the trees on the opposite side of the street—Madeleine Fleming pushed back the thick veil which had covered her haggard face, and gazed across through the half-opened shutters of the Hoxley mansion.

Then of a sudden the shutters were flung open, and the light streamed out into the dark street.

The sight which Madeleine Fleming at that moment saw, made the warm blood pulsing through her youthful frame flow back in wild suffocating torrents to the heart.

Her brain reeled fearfully, and a wild, wailing scream broke from her bloodless lips. She threw her nervous hands up in the air and staggered back

But a strong arm was suddenly held out to her, and a tall figure sprang to her side.

"Come, come with me, my poor girl! Lean on me, and trust me! Come; I, too, have seen all!"

And Stephen Smith, the Kentuckian, with warmth, tenderness and sympathy in his manner, drew the maiden's trembling arm within his, and as a deep-breathed anathema escaped his lips, walked away, half-bearing in his arms the fainting form of Arthur Fleming's daughter.

CHAPTER XXI.

UNDER THE BAN.

For many days and weeks Madeleine Fleming was like one crazed. Her rounded face grew thin and haggard, and dark circles, betokening grief and agony of mind, surrounded her eyes.

Her father, over whom, by this time, a continual cloud of despondency seemed to have settled forever, noticed the roses fading from the cheek, and the rayless, lack-luster eyes of his sad, thoughtful daughter.

The old father spoke to his child, but she evaded him and replied incoherently, always endeavoring to cheer away his gloomy feelings. Yet there was no heart, no spirit, in her efforts, and Madeleine did not convince her father that she was happy, as she said.

Then the half-distracted old man thought that his daughter was brooding over the sad news he had told her some time since, regarding his impending bankruptcy.

The cloud settled deeper on Arthur Fleming, and every day he prayed, with increasing earnestness, for the safety and successful return of the Rover.

He often thought of his former happiness and contentment; when the glad days slipped by almost unperceived.

But those days had gone by; the mansion in which Arthur Fleming lived was simply a gilded palace, belonging to others! The food which supplied his table was purchased with the money of his creditors.

The cloud, freighted with woe and trouble, had long since appeared, small at first, it is true, but portentous and ominous, and momentarily increasing.

And Arthur Fleming, though he knew the cloud would swell in its proportions, and rise higher toward the zenith, as his own fortunes went down in inverse ratio, yet he chose to turn his back on that ominous bank looming up. He would not face it; and with eyes closed, and head bent down, he refused to see the black shadow at his feet.

Now, at last, his whole horizon was covered over, and the old man was forced to open his eyes to see his way.

In a new battle with life, in a new combat for money, Arthur Fleming feared the result. He feared, on account of his daughter; in her he was wrapt up. He was beyond the middle of life; indeed, his autumn leaves had fallen and his feet were treading the dreary confines of the icy winterland of life.

The father feared another conflict for gold—feared it for Madeleine's sake.

The stake he was playing for was lofty; but the game was fearfully hazardous.

Should his hope be realized—should the gallant old Rover return in safety—all would be well; but if disaster should overtake his venture, he and his daughter would be engulfed in ruin; the wolf would force his way through the walnut doors of the fine mansion, and stand, lank and ravenous, in the hall!

These terrible calculations between success and failure, told on the old man's frame; and his speech became a little wild.

Madeleine had observed the change in her father with anxious eye and fearing spirit. This had added to her own heart-trouble, had weighed her down, had given her sleepless hours and nights, and thin, wan cheeks.

Since that fatal evening, on which the maiden had consulted the old clairvoyant, and afterward under the gloom of the elms opposite the Hoxley mansion, had seen, through the open window, that spectacle which made her reel, Madeleine Fleming had been a changed creature.

Apart from her father's troubles, she had her own.

Stephen Smith had called several times at the Fleming mansion, and was always readily admitted. Between him and Madeleine there had been earnest and soul-deep conversations and interchanges of thought and surmise. On such occasions the maiden was always more cheerful. She hung as confidently on the words of the Kentuckian, as, on more occasions than one, she had clung to his stout right arm.

Fenton Thorne's name was seldom mentioned at these conferences; whenever it was, it was with trembling by Madeleine; with a scowl and suppressed malediction by Stephen Smith.

Arthur Fleming, so enwrapt in his own thoughts, which at times were absolutely hideous, and so engrossed in the fate of the old Rover, paid but little heed to Stephen Smith's rather frequent visits, though the anxious father scanned every day the white face of his daughter.

For some time, Fenton Thorne—now a Sophomore—had not put in an appearance at the home of his betrothed. It is true, however, that he had written warm, loving notes to Madeleine; but he had received no replies.

Between the young man and his chum, strange to say, a decided coolness had sprung up. This, to a great extent, was occasioned by Stephen Smith's persistently rude and snarling demeanor.

Fenton Thorne, in all frankness, had asked him the meaning of this, and the reply which he received had sent the blood tingling through his cheeks.

But Stephen Smith had not noticed the wrath of his friend, and had put him gently, yet firmly, aside.

The chums at once separated. Fenton, indepen-

dently, seeking quarters at Hope College, and Stephen quietly and unconcernedly remaining in his old room.

The whilom friends frequently came in contact, and always spoke, distantly, it is true, though Fenton Thorne's large, expressive eyes often affectionately watched the form of his dear old chum, and once or twice, those eyes had filled with tears.

Fenton Thorne was ambitious; he knew his own powers, and some time before he had privately made an application to the Faculty for a premature examination, to allow him to enter the Junior class. He studied diligently, scarcely taking time for meals, and almost entirely disregarding exercise.

Stephen Smith had noted the young fellow's industry, though he knew not the occasion; for Fenton had studiously kept it back, intending it as a surprise if he succeeded, as a secret if he failed.

The Faculty had readily granted the application. At length the young man bethought him, not that he had forgotten her, of Madeleine. Then he remembered his neglect. Then Madeleine's strange silence recurred, with double force, to him, and a sickening feeling grew over his heart.

That same evening he went to the Fleming mansion, and rung the bell. His summons was soon answered; but John, who went to the door, looked somewhat embarrassed as he saw who it was.

The young man noticed this, and produced his card at once.

Without inviting him to enter, John took the card and entered the parlor, which was brilliantly lighted, leaving the young man standing at the door.

In a half-minute the servant returned, and returning the card to the student, said:

"Miss Fleming is engaged, and she directs me to say that she does not wish to see Mr. Thorne."

"Did she say that, John?" asked Fenton, starting back.

"Those were her words, sir," returned the domestic, closing the door at the same time.

CHAPTER XXII.

A RIFT IN THE SKY.

THE collegian's frame shook, the blood boiled in his veins, and the color faded from his cheeks.

Reeling like a drunken man, he staggered away toward the iron gate which was hanging ajar, as if inviting his departure.

As the young man reached the street, he turned and gazed back at the familiar mansion. He started violently and gasped for breath, as his gaze shot through the brilliantly-lighted window and rested on two persons within.

In that parlor, Madeleine Fleming and Stephen Smith were seated on a sofa. The latter held the small hand of the former in his own strong palm, and Madeleine was looking trustingly, fearlessly into the handsome, dusky face of the Kentuckian.

They had already forgotten him, who but now had called.

Sick at heart, his brain reeling, Fenton Thorne turned away, and clenching his gloved hands together, staggered rather than walked toward the distant college on the hill.

When he and Stephen Smith met again, there was no recognition between them. As was customary, the Kentuckian nodded his head; but Fenton Thorne noticed not the salutation. He simply fixed a dark, scowling look upon the other and passed on.

Stephen Smith started at the insulting deportment of his old chum, and for a moment a red flush swept over his swarthy face. But, as if recollecting himself, he bowed his head, while a contemptuous smile lighted the corners of his mouth, and strode on.

Several weeks passed thus—Fenton Thorne, almost every day, writing loving, burning letters to Madeleine Fleming, ending at last in accusing the maiden of transferring her "affections to the traitor Stephen Smith!"

Then the young man received an answer—the first for many a long, weary day of heart and soul-suffering.

The missive read thus:

"MR. THORNE:

"I do not love Stephen Smith; I esteem him highly as a steadfast, unflinching friend. I will be at home this evening. Oblige me by calling; and be so kind as to bring with you all of my foolish letters; also my daguerreotype.

"Respectfully,

"MADELEINE FLEMING."

Clouds rushed over Fenton Thorne's brain, and a storm raged in his heart that evening, as he hurriedly walked up the graveled way, leading from the street-gate, to the hall door of the Fleming mansion.

He hesitated not a moment, but pulled the bell. In a moment he was admitted by John, who simply, and it seemed impertinently, pointed to the parlor-door.

Fenton Thorne, his anger almost choking him—entered the room.

Madeleine was seated on the sofa; by her side, stern, contemptuous and imperturbable, sat Stephen Smith.

"Good-evening, Madeleine—Miss Fleming," said the student, as he stood within the room, at the same time frankly reaching out his hand. He did not notice Stephen Smith at all.

Madeleine drew proudly back and refused the proffered hand. Fenton Thorne colored viciously, and his eyes snapped fire. He drew himself up grandly.

"I am here, Miss Fleming, in accordance with your request," he said, with dignity; "and I have a package for you." His voice slightly trembled.

He laid a small parcel on the piano, and taking up

his hat and gloves, which he had placed on a table, he bowed and turned toward the door.

Madeleine saw the movement.

"Please be seated for a moment, Mr. Thorne," she said, hastily—her voice shaking, despite her efforts to the contrary.

The young man turned obediently, and seated himself, at some distance from the maiden.

Stephen Smith left his seat, and strolled unconcernedly toward the window—then back to the mantle.

"I did request you to come, Mr. Thorne; my object was, that we should have a clear understanding before we part forever."

She paused.

"Part! And what is all this mystery, I ask, Madeleine? What have I done that you thus treat me—thus cast me off?" demanded the young man, with fire in his eyes, and lightning in his tongue.

The maiden recoiled from that imperious voice.

At three strides Stephen Smith drew near.

"Shall I remove this impulsive youth? Speak but the word, Miss Madeleine!" and he gazed with a lowering brow at the visitor.

Fenton Thorne kept his eye upon the other, but said nothing. There was decision and determination upon his face, however.

"No, no, Mr. Smith; I beg you to be seated. You ask me, Mr. Thorne," she continued, turning to her old lover, "why I have cast you off? I have not cast you off! Nay, do not interrupt me, for our interview must be brief. I have not cast you off; but, Fenton Thorne, you have been false to me, you have cast me off! Oh! Heaven!" and the girl hid her face in her hands.

Stephen Smith was now drumming fiercely—at the imminent risk of breaking it—on the glass shade over the wax-work on the mantle.

"Madeleine, what mean you?" again thundered the student.

"Are you a dissembler to my very face, as well as behind my back? Shame on you, Fenton Thorne!"

"Ay! shame on you!" hissed the Kentuckian, unable longer to hold his peace.

"Good Heaven! This is too much!" groaned Fenton. "I beg you, Madeleine, by the love you once professed for me—I beg you, Stephen Smith, by the memory of our old-time friendship, to explain this hideous affair—this black dream to me! Or, for Heaven's sake, kill me at once!"

Slowly Madeleine Fleming raised her eyes, suffused with tears, to his face, and asked in trembling tones: "And do you not love—Myra Hoxley?"

"WHAT! I love Myra Hoxley? I loathe her, I hate her, and the ground she walks upon!" almost thundered the young man.

"Is this true, Fenton? Ah! for mercy's sake, speak—speak!"

"Speak, speak, speak on, Fent!" and Stephen Smith, his long hair falling around his dusky face, leaned over to get the answer.

"I tell you nay, I swear it! that I HATE Myra Hoxley! Heaven forgive me if I sin in so doing!"

"One word more, Fenton Thorne," and Stephen Smith scarcely breathed, as he almost sunk on his knees, to face his former friend, "where were you on the evening of the 26th of December?"

"In my room in the college—no, I forgot: I was in Professor Lincoln's study, passing my examination for entrance into the Junior class."

"And now, Fenton," and the words were scarcely audible, "read this letter, and then tell me if you know the hand which penned the words."

The maiden scarcely breathed, and her eyes stared, almost unmeaningly, in the face of the collegian.

A hurried glance over the letter, and a dark, meaning frown settled on Fenton Thorne's face. He crushed the sheet in his nervous grasp.

"And you do not see through this wicked trick?" he asked, in a husky whisper. "Where are your eyes, Stephen Smith, that you do not detect in every line, and every word, a forgery—RALPH ROSS, THE FORGER?"

"Ay! ay! Fool that I was! I'll break every bone in his body!" and the Kentuckian uttered a loud cry of triumph, as he gathered his long-estranged friend to his bosom.

And Madeleine quietly, tenderly folded her arms around that dear form, and murmured:

"Take back the letters—keep the daguerreotype, my darling!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

TIDINGS OF THE ROVER.

TIME was on the wing; days, weeks and months sped by; but there came no news of the long-absent craft, the gallant old tea-ship.

Many a sleepless night, and many a weary watching day had gone by with Arthur Fleming. The old man was haggard under the fearful anxiety.

Many ships had sailed in, from over the distant seas; but they brought to the anxious merchant no information of his old ship. It was a terrible tax on the poor father, and in sadness and silence he groped about his splendid mansion.

But Madeleine was rosy again; a joyous smile was now ever upon her lip, and the rich tints of health bloomed again in her cheeks. The maiden was now satisfied in the abiding love of Fenton Thorne; of course she was happy. She scarcely, for a moment, weighed her father's troubles; for she was rich again in the love of a noble, trusting soul.

For fear we may forget it, it may be remarked here, that soon after the joyous reconciliation between the lovers, and Stephen Smith as an interested third party, on that memorable night in the Fleming mansion, the Kentuckian had studiously sought out Ralph Ross.

Once the men had met; it was in front of the chapel, and Stephen Smith, with angry, impatient

steps, had advanced upon the other. But before even words could pass, the venerable President of the University—the old man well beloved—had drawn near. When he had passed, Ralph Ross had disappeared.

After that, months sped by before the students again encountered one another; for Ross had, for a time, withdrawn from college on the plea of ill-health.

At this report, Stephen Smith smiled grimly.

Six months afterward Ralph Ross made his appearance once again at college; but the Kentuckian's blood had cooled, and now he sought no conflict with the man.

Madeleine Fleming, happy in her own heart, would not admit to her bosom the sorrows and troubles of others. She feared no more the ominous revelations of soothsayers and clairvoyants, and thought not again of Madame Felice Duplicite, who, by the by, in the mean time, had left for parts unknown.

Madeleine was very happy, and by dint of many entreaties, had persuaded her father to celebrate her birth-night, now again rapidly approaching.

The struggle in the old man's bosom was severe. He would not willingly incur such an expense; and then the Rover! she was not yet in! and there was no tidings of her. But he could not refuse the earnest pleading of his daughter, and her powerful point that in case he had no celebration, "it would look so strange!" had wondrous weight with the old man. He could not well go again to Niagara for another winter view of the "Falls!"

He had fondly expected the Rover in, before this trying time.

However, he determined to make the effort, come what would. He would, to the last, keep up appearances—for Madeleine's sake!

Invitations were duly issued, in the same elegant style, and not one of the former friends and acquaintances were omitted. Old Welcome Hoxley and Myra, as well as Ralph Ross, received the perfumed cards, requesting their company.

Madeleine Fleming was forgiving, there was no cloud now on her heart, and she could afford to overlook the shortcoming and treachery of her most inveterate foes—those foes merely suspected.

The time rolled around; the eventful evening again settled down over the city. Again the Fleming mansion was all aglow from attic to basement; again flashing equipages swept up to the stately entrance; again the brilliant chandelier gleamed down on crumpling folds of rich silks and satins, on glossy broadcloth, on flashing diamonds and burning rubies. Again all was happiness and glow.

Even old Welcome Hoxley, clad in the extreme of richness and fashion, was at the mansion.

This was singular, and Arthur Fleming, the host, felt a cold tremor flit over his person, as his old enemy and rival came forward to greet him and wish him and his daughter the compliments of the occasion.

The old manufacturer had come late; but, as if to make amends for his tardiness, his face was wreathed in smiles, and his voice was silvery in sweetness.

Myra, too, was there, all sparkle and splendor; her escort was Ralph Ross. Of course the rich manufacturer's daughter was amiable; but we dare not analyze the feelings which rioted in her bosom.

Stephen Smith, sober, staid and dignified, was there, all politeness, gallantry and good-humor; and arm-in-arm with his old chum, Fenton Thorne elbowed his way, as if perfectly at home, through the crowded rooms.

Gaily fled the festive hours; and amid the infectious joy of the hour, even the morose and anxious host—his dark, dreary thoughts ever wandering far away after the missing Rover—felt his sad heart grow lighter, and the sluggish life-current beat and flow faster, as he hearkened to the jocund laughter—the merry cut-and-thrust of jest and repartee.

But in the midst of the hilarity, all of a sudden, the hall-bell sounded loud and warningly.

In an instant an ominous, deathlike silence crept—no one knew why—over the large assembly. Then confused murmurs were heard without; and in a moment, John, the serving man, hastily entered the parlor and crowded his way toward old Arthur Fleming. He handed a sealed note to his employer.

Reckless of the presence of the company, regardless of etiquette, the old merchant, with greedy, trembling fingers, tore open the frail envelope. Then, on the unfolded half-sheet his eyes fell.

One glance, and a low, heart-piercing wail broke from his lips. He staggered back, and clutching wildly in the air, sunk into the strong arms of Stephen Smith.

The fatal sheet fluttered softly away, and settled upon the rich carpet. Then the old man, with a sudden effort, tottered to his feet, and as a wild, maddening fire flashed from his eyes, he exclaimed, with a maniac's gibber:

"Ha! ha! She has gone down! And I—ha! ha! The cloud is black, and shows no silvery lining! Ha! ha! ha! Who said it? Yet—yes—yes! I am a beggar! Howl on, ye fiends, for THE ROVER HAS GONE DOWN!"

Stephen Smith's arms closed again, firmly, about the fainting form of the old man, and the Kentuckian bore him gently and softly away.

Slowly, gloatingly, Welcome Hoxley stooped and picked up the crushed sheet. Then, amid an awful silence, he read, aloud:

"New York, December 18, 1855.

"A. J. FLEMING, Providence, R. I.:

"Brig 'Rattler' just in. When rounding the Horn, reports picking up small boat—'Rover' painted on the stern. The Rover has gone down in a gale.

"J. H. ROSS, Agent."

CHAPTER XXIV.
OUT IN THE COLD.

WOE and desolation had indeed settled over the lordly Fleming mansion. No rattling carriage now rolled up to the broad entrance; no sympathizing friends by scores, as on the festive birth-night, crowded there to speak words of comfort and cheer.

The dreadful secret had been divulged; it had been torn forth from the anguished bosom of a poor, gibbering maniac. Friends, falsely so called, had already turned their backs upon him around whom they had lately fawned.

The mansion was closed—its windows sadly shut, as if death had entered there. The crazy father and the stricken daughter were alone in their misfortune and misery.

Even John, the domestic, and old Martha, the housekeeper, had already turned up their contemptuous noses; and having received their wages—paid from Madeleine's scanty pin-money—had shaken the dust of the disreputable mansion from their respectable shoes, and gone to seek employment elsewhere.

And old Arthur Fleming, striding up and down the limits of the library—not his any longer—cried and laughed by times, tore his white locks from his aged head, and knelt down devoutly before a miniature model of his lost tea-ship, and prayed, with streaming eyes and piteous, pleading words, for the Rover to come back! to bring home to him her sunken cargo, lying beneath the black waves.

And Madeleine, cowering there as she watched the old, broken form, prayed, too! But her prayer was that the Night would come—that the Grave would swallow up all sorrow and every heart-ache.

Yet the inmates of the Fleming mansion were not forgotten by all.

On the very next morning, after the fatal birth-night festival, two young gentlemen, sober and dignified in demeanor, had softly entered the great hall-door without ringing.

They were Fenton Thorne and Stephen Smith, and their mission was a delicate one, but they were firm in fulfilling that mission, for they came the bearers of consolation and sympathy.

We will not linger on this sad epoch in this heart-history; we must hasten on and detail the events which followed the *denouement* of Madeleine's last birth-night fete.

Fenton Thorne and Stephen Smith called often at the mansion; but they had never held conversation with the poor, broken-hearted lunatic.

At last the young men had offered a purse containing money to Madeleine. It must not be supposed that this was done in the plain, blunt manner as we have recorded it. It was a matter requiring diligent study and rehearsal at the hands of these noble-hearted young men.

They knew the extreme delicacy of the act; but that act was prompted by the most sublime of motives—esteem and sympathy.

By lots, it fell to Stephen Smith to offer the money.

To have seen the tall, brown-faced Kentuckian begin the subject—his nervousness as he proceeded—his trembling hands, as he held out to the maiden the silken purse containing the gold; to have seen the big tears flow down his face, and to have heard the irrestrainable sob, as the swarthy-faced student dropped the money into the lap of the girl, was to have looked upon a brave picture.

There was a sharp, agonizing struggle in Madeleine Fleming's bosom, but it was not protracted. The girl saw the nobleness of the gift, and with the alternative of want and misery before her—thinking of her poor, dear, demented old father, she bowed her head over the friendly gold, and wept sweet tears of gratitude.

In ten days from the reception of the news of the loss of the Rover, a placard was posted on the large door of the Fleming mansion. That placard announced, in displayed type, that the house and grounds were for sale at an early day.

The day of the sale rolled around, and with it came crowds of curiosity-seekers, idle ones, wishing to get a glimpse of poor, impoverished Arthur Fleming, now stark mad!

The house was sold; and then an hour of long-looked-for, undisguised triumph, came for Welcome Hoxley; for he was the purchaser.

The old manufacturer's chuckle of satisfaction had nearly gained for him, despite his gray hairs, a chastisement at the hands of Stephen Smith.

Late on the afternoon of the day of sale, a close carriage drove away from the rear gate of the mansion. It took the unfrequented streets, until it reached the spreading, wooded country; then it dashed rapidly over the Bay Road, skirting the Narraganset, and leading down toward Vue de l'Eau.

Within that carriage sat Madeleine Fleming, mute and in tears—her heart bowed down. By her side cowered her old father, moaning to himself, and gibbering about the sunken Rover. Opposite, eloquent in his silence, sat Fenton Thorne, the collegian.

On the box outside, alongside the driver, as if defying the jeers of the world, and to show his perfect independence, sat Stephen Smith.

At half-past eight o'clock that night the carriage halted before the rustic gate of the little cottage, nestled under the bluff near Vue de l'Eau, and to which we have before referred.

Thither the two stricken ones had retreated.

The cottage had been nicely fitted up for their reception; and Madeleine's eyes filled with tears of gratitude as she observed here further evidences of friendship from a source she knew full well.

Alas! that we should be called upon to record it! The creditors of Arthur Fleming were not satisfied with the sale of the fine mansion. They ferreted him out in his humble home.

Again a placard was posted, again a sale was held, and once more, as if his triumph was not complete, Welcome Hoxley purchased the cottage.

What cared he for expense, so that he gained thereby a conquest over his ancient rival? His factories—though they were not insured—brought him piles of money! With the income of a single month, he could pay for both mansion and cottage.

This time it required all the stern counsel of Fenton Thorne to prevent Stephen Smith from thrashing the hard-hearted purchaser.

Madeleine and her helpless father were, at last, out in the cold, uncharitable world. Still, however, they were not forsaken; for the heroism with which Fenton Thorne and his friend, the Kentuckian, clung to the outcasts was grand.

A month had elapsed, and we find father and daughter domiciled in a small, retired dwelling on Broad street. Fenton and Stephen, to the extent of their ability, still aided them; but Madeleine had long since determined to go out into the world and battle for herself. Nor could arguments dissuade her from her undertaking.

And the girl did go out into the world; but she was everywhere turned away. In her distress, she applied to Welcome Hoxley for employment in his mills. That cold-hearted man had repulsed her with scorn.

At last she succeeded in getting needle-work; and all day long the maiden bowed over her work, and prayed for strength and contentment, as the tears trickled silently through her thin fingers.

And Arthur Fleming, broken, and wasting away, passed long hours moaning and groaning, and talking foolishly about the long-missing Rover.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE SPECTRAL SHIP.

A YEAR of suffering and heart-woe passed thus—Madeleine working diligently and constantly, and making a small pittance day by day; her father praying piteously for the Rover.

Welcome Hoxley thrived in business, and was content with his triumph over his old rival. But, as yet, he had not paid for the mansion or cottage, both of which were lying unoccupied.

He and his creditors in the matter were satisfied about the payment, which of course was good.

Another year had passed, with its sorrows and joys, its troubles and triumphs.

The memorable birth-night of Madeleine Fleming had at last arrived.

The night was cool, not cold; for the winter had been mild, and neither the cove nor the bay had been covered with ice. A brilliant moon shone down calm and clear; but the glittering orb was fast sinking toward the far horizon.

Ralph Ross had graduated and was pretending to practice law. Stephen Smith still lingered, simply to be with his friend, Fenton.

But this was Madeleine's birth-night again, and the humble home of Arthur Fleming was lit up from top to bottom, as of old, in honor of the occasion; nothing more.

A small table of refreshments stood unpretendingly in a corner of the little parlor. Fenton Thorne and Stephen Smith were there—the only company—each having already deposited his present on the table, and spoken heartfelt congratulations with the daughter, and soothed the old man, tenderly, in his dreamings of the Rover.

Ten o'clock was near, and still the festive eve was celebrated, quietly and happily.

Suddenly there came a distant, murmuring sound. It grew louder, and came nearer and nearer. Then the cry of "FIRE!" swelled over the city.

The clamor echoed in the little parlor of Arthur Fleming, the penniless.

Then a ruddy flare glinted red and ghastly through the fibers of the thin, cheap curtains, and glowed dull and menacing on the bare walls of the humble apartment.

"Come! come!" cried Madeleine, "let us ascend to the roof, and see where the conflagration is."

They quickly mounted to the top of the house, through the sky-light. The old man went too. Childishly, he wanted to see the fire, and hear the uproar in the streets. Stephen Smith guided the old father's tottering feet.

They cast their eyes about them.

The whole sky was red and glowing; but the brilliant crimson toward the west made the party look in the direction of the little manufacturing town of Olneyville.

Madeleine started, as she turned her gaze thitherward.

"Good heavens!" she exclaimed; "a factory is on fire! a large one, too! God pity the poor ones who will be made homeless to-night!"

The cries and shouts of the firemen, and the clangor and rumble of the engines rose higher and higher.

Stephen Smith, steadying himself, leaned down over the eaves of the house and shouted:

"Where is the fire?"

"At Olneyville! The Hoxley mills are burning!" roared back the fireman as he dashed along.

But, hark!

In the midst of the cries of the red-shirted braves, and the turbulent shouting of the fire-mob, there came another cry.

It came from the shores of the distant bay. First it seemed like a shout; then it became louder and more distinct; then a wild, out-welling cheer came booming over the city.

A weird, singular sight was then presented, one not soon forgotten by the group on the housetop, as they looked over the intervening roofs toward the Narraganset, whose bosom, in the reflected light, looked like a sea of blood.

There, slowly sailing along, her tall spars looming high toward the paling stars in the red sky, her spectral fore and main-top-sails bellying to the cool winter breeze, glided a gallant ship.

And there, in the red light of the far-away burning mills, she suddenly wore around. In an instant her sails were furled, and a heavy anchor, rattling with its chain, fell with a loud splash in the glowing waters.

And Arthur Fleming, erect as an oak, proud and sturdy, his left hand resting on the shoulder of Stephen Smith, pointed to that stately ship, looking like a phantom bark in the red light, and cried, with a loud and healthy voice:

"Thank God! Thank God! For—THE ROVER HAS COME!"

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE SILVER LINING.

FROM a lofty window, in the rear of his royal mansion, Welcome Hoxley and his imperious daughter watched the raging fire in the distance. The man's face was fearful to look upon; it was wild with anxiety and suspense, and his teeth were sunk deep into the white, bloodless lip.

Still he gazed, and still he drew his labored breath. Reckless of the night-wind, now cold and raw, which swept in from over the bay, the old man leaned, nervously, dangerously out from that tall window, and then he spoke:

"Myra, my daughter, if that factory is mine, I am ruined—and—FOREVER! I am not insured, and—Hollo! there!"

The red-shirted fireman paused.

"What factory is that?" thundered the old man.

"The Hoxley mills, sir! They are destroyed!" returned the unrecking fireman.

At that moment came the wild cheers from the bay; then, the stately, towering spars of a noble ship, sailing along in the red light; then the rattling anchor-chain; then the wild, indistinct, meaningless shout, shaping itself finally into:

"THE ROVER! THE ROVER!"

With one startling shriek, Welcome Hoxley threw his hands up; another moment, failing to recover his balance, he reeled, and fell headlong forth from the giddy, gaping window!

And Myra Hoxley sunk down on the floor of that lonely garret-room, and gibbered wildly, for reason had fled from her forever!

There was dark gloom settling that night over some in the good old city of Providence, but the somber cloud which had so long hovered over Arthur Fleming, had, at last, showed its silver lining.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE TALE OF THE ROVER.

THAT night, the 18th of December, Madeleine's birth-night, was one long to be remembered in the good city of Providence, one long to be remembered with gratitude by the humble dwellers in the little tenement-house in the rear of Broad street, one which certain actors in that scene and participants in the events of that occasion have not yet forgotten.

No one in Arthur Fleming's unpretending abode closed an eye in sleep that night; for, gathered in a close circle in the little parlor, every voice was hushed, as old Jack Kelson, who had by dint of inquiring here and there, in his own blunt manner, found his old employer, told the thrilling story of the missing Rover.

Long after daylight, when the rumbling drays were rattling in the street, betokening the battle of business begun again, old Jack Kelson finished his recital with these words:

"And now, Mr. Fleming, I must go and see the old woman and my houseful of brats, dear brats, Heaven help them! . . . But—but—thank Heaven! my old friend, the Rover is in, safe and sound! and my name is not Jack Kelson, if she has not beneath her hatches, a cargo, worth in the market to-day, three hundred thousand dollars!"

It may be well for us, at this point, in order to have the reader thoroughly understand the hings of this story, to retrace our steps somewhat, to throw some light on certain dark portions of this life-history, to connect a sundered link, to tie a broken thread. To do this, we must go back to that dark evening, on which certain late lights were burning in the gloom-enshrouded city of Providence.

It may be remembered that on this somber night, as given in a preceding chapter, Welcome Hoxley, the manufacturer, entertained certain company in his cosy little back sitting-room.

They were two men, very rough-looking fellows. They were habited as seamen, and their hard, bony hands and bronzed visages confirmed them as such.

Those two men were the first and second mates of the good ship Rover, then lying at anchor in the lower bay, ready for sea. Their errand at the Hoxley mansion was to answer a summons from the wealthy manufacturer; to hearken to a proposition

from him, which, in case they accepted, would prove very beneficial to them. These men had been covertly sounded for some days by means of letters over a fictitious signature; and when once they had committed themselves, old Hoxley had written to them boldly, requesting, almost *demanding*, that they come to his house on that certain evening. Myra had been the letter post between them; she knew every thing that was going on. That night old Hoxley hesitated not, but made an offer to those rough men, of a large sum of money in gold, and eternal secrecy besides, should they pledge themselves to prevent the return of the Rover and her rich cargo to Providence; and he partly gave his reasons. In addition to this, he pledged them as much more gold when they returned and told him that their work had been well done.

Welcome Hoxley had hard work to raise those many golden dollars; at that time he was much embarrassed and the tide of luck seemed to have set against him. We have seen that afterward, by some strange freak of fortune, the tide had risen with him and floated high on its proud current; and, we have seen, too, when that same ebb-and-flow of ill-luck had set against him—forever!

Such was the treacherous compact made that dark night in old Hoxley's back sitting-room, and the men who issued so noiselessly forth into the quiet street, late that night, were the two mates, the two mysterious persons whom Stephen Smith, the Kentuckian, followed to the southern wharves of the city.

To resume: the Rover had gone to sea with a spanking breeze. After months of storm and tide-calm and blow, she had reached her far-away port in the Orient. The voyage had been successful, and old captain Kelson, who was strangely, to a disinterested observer, interested in the trip, breathed freer as the heavy anchors rattled down in that far-away haven.

The ship was quickly stowed, *packed* with her precious cargo, and once again put to sea, on her return voyage.

Jack Kelson was anxious to get back to his straitened employer and he was wise enough to endeavor to catch the trade-winds.

The voyage home was prosperous, to a certain extent. But one dark night, it came on to blow heavily: all hands were called to shorten sail and the skipper himself walked the deck, trumpet in hand. Suddenly he was felled by a heavy blow, struck from behind. Before he could recover himself, he was bound hand and foot, hurried aft, and flung into one of the ship's boats, hanging half-suspended from the davits, over the boiling sea. The rude shock recalled the old man to partial consciousness, and as he cast his eyes about him he saw in the boat with himself six of his crew, bound in the same manner. He could not speak, for a piece of sail-cloth was stretched roughly over his mouth; but he saw that the ship's long-boat was also being lowered, and that in her sat the two mates and four men. Another moment and the boat in which he lay was dropped hurriedly into the sea, and then the old man saw that the Rover was sinking! The horrible truth flashed over him in a moment; the ship had been scuttled! And then the long-boat and her crew was lowered into the seething sea and in a moment was swept far away.

It was evident that the traitors had miscalculated the severity of the storm, for the last Captain Kelson saw of them they were bending to their oars in a mighty but vain endeavor to reach the ship again. Then they were lost in the gloom.

But the small boat, in which lay the old man and his bound shipmates, hugged close to the fast-setting ship, which, indeed, served as a breakwater and kept it from being hurled away.

Old Jack Kelson was a man of nerve and action, and, withal, gifted with a lion's strength. At a glance he comprehended his perilous situation, and making one mighty effort, he snapped, like pack-thread, the lashing which bound his hands. Half a minute only elapsed before his feet were free. Then, in an instant, he seized the painter of the boat, which the mutineers, in their hurry, had left uncut, and flung it, at random, high on the ship's bulwarks.

Heaven was with him in the effort, for the stout line caught. In a moment, by a dextrous hitch, the skipper had secured the rope, thus fastening securely his boat to the ship.

Not two minutes elapsed before he had severed the cords of his companions, and then, with a shout of triumph, the lion-hearted skipper ascended, hand-over-hand, to the ship's rail. Panting, but not dismayed, he reached the deck, and then his men, one by one, scrambled up.

There was still work to be done. The ship was broaching to fearfully, in the long troughs; her sails flapping like thunder in the howling wind; the rudder—the wheel being unmanned—was thumping horribly on the coppered bottom, and the ship was still sinking—sinking!

Those men who stood by skipper Jack Kelson, on the decks of the Rover, on that wild night of flying spray and shrieking wind, were tried and true; for they had resisted the temptation in its most seductive form, and it was by treachery that they had been overcome and bound.

Old Jack Kelson's words were as calm as if his old ship was lying at anchor in her far-away home port, and his words were clear as a clarion.

The men worked like heroes; the wheel was manned, the flapping canvas furled to every thing save a small storm stay-sail, and then the real work began.

The cargo was stowed well; but it had to be shifted or naught but destruction was before them. Tarred canvas was prepared with heavy weights

and slings, and then, piece by piece, the heavy chests were, as sailors phrase it, "broken out," and stowed to the port-side of the vessel.

The Rover felt the change, for slowly she listed, slowly her port rail sunk, slowly her starboard rose higher and higher in the dark air, and then the scuttle-hole was found. Then the tarred canvas was flung over that gaping orifice, into which the water had been pouring furiously.

Heaven be praised! went up from every heart; and then, overboard again into the little boat, still towing and surging alongside, went two brave fellows with hammers and heavy nails; and, under the tall, careening hull of the big ship, they nailed home the friendly cloth over the awful scuttle-hole! Again they were quickly on deck, and the friendly small boat hoisted in.

A loud hurrah of triumph burst from the throats of that little band of men, who were so bravely fighting death; and then, each one bowed his head to Him who had given them the victory!

Now Jack Kelson was master of the situation. Not one drop of water could force its way through the tarred canvas! and what had already leaked in amounted to nothing more than ballast. The cargo was uninjured, the victory complete.

The battle with the gale was child's play, for old Jack, the skipper; he heeded it not—he cared not how it roared and raged; the good old Rover, stiff and stanch, was under his feet; she obeyed her helm, and the old man could laugh defiance at the storm.

That night, at two bells, when the gale was at its height—when the Rover was burying her bows at every lunge beneath the wildly moaning billows, a small, dark object, just perceptible, was seen by the watch on the fore-castle. Another moment, and it was under the bows of the Rover; then, a faint crush and feeble, shrieking cries were borne above the blast, as the heavy ship thundered on!

All on board knew that cry to be the wail of drowning men, and all knew who those men were.

The storm blew itself away, but the Rover was unharmed, and then, dropping sail after sail to the wind, Captain Kelson stood away for a friendly port.

That port was reached; the old Rover's scuttled hull securely patched, and then, with a light heart the gallant old skipper loosed his broad sails to the lively breeze and bore away on a long stretch, across the white-capped seas, toward his distant haven in the West.

That he reached that haven—that he came into port, under his fore and mainsail, by the red light of Welcome Hoxley's burning mills, we already know.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

ALL'S WELL.

WITH the glorious dawn of such intelligence as the safe arrival of the Rover, suddenly bursting upon him, reason and coherence, which for a year had forsaken Arthur Fleming, returned to him; he was well again—sane in mind as ever. He no longer moaned and chattered over the lost tea-ship; the gallant craft and her noble captain had returned, bringing health, reason and happiness.

Not many weeks elapsed before the precious cargo was sold, and Arthur Fleming was once again a rich man, and what was better with him, he was free and untrammelled.

But the old merchant did not forget the gallant skipper and his noble crew. A substantial remembrance that gladdened their hearts, was presented to each one.

Nor was the old Rover forgotten, for, on the day of sale of her tempest-tossed cargo, a princely banquet was held aboard of her, her gayest bunting was flung to the breeze, and her old, time-honored decks were joyous with congratulations, song and jest.

To that banquet, besides Fenton Thorne and Stephen Smith, none were invited, save Captain Jack Kelson, his family and hero-crew of six.

A notable event of the occasion, a most hilarious one! was a grand *pas de deux* executed by Stephen Smith and old Jack, the skipper. Yes, for once in his life, and only once, wine had gotten the better of the old man's reason, and he sung and danced, and shouted and roared like a very Bacchus.

Of course, pretty, blushing, happy Madeleine was there, and nearly all the time the banquet lasted, she sat holding Fenton Thorne's hand in hers, and silently murmuring her thanks to Heaven.

Welcome Hoxley's death created some surprise in Providence, but no regrets. How it happened, was only surmised; for poor Myra was a raving maniac and could not tell.

The manufacturer's crushed remains were borne quietly out to Swan Point, and there laid away to rest. But few mourners followed in the scanty train; and to-day, no chiseled marble indicates his grave.

The unfortunate Myra Hoxley, in a few days, was conveyed by sympathizing neighbors to the Butler Asylum, where she was once admitted.

There was no mistaking her malady.

Ralph Ross disappeared from Providence, and our friends were never again troubled with his presence, though Stephen Smith searched high and low for him, and actually spoke of offering a reward for him, through the medium of the newspapers.

Another year yet passed, and Madeleine's birth-night had again come around. In that year many events had taken place.

By a little judicious management, Mr. Fleming had recovered his splendid mansion, as well as the

little cottage by the Vue de l'Eau. Old Hoxley had never paid an installment upon either.

In the meantime, Myra Hoxley had died a sad, weary death in the asylum, leaving no message to any one, no parting words betokening reason. But a friend was raised up to her then, one who remembered her, despite the dark circumstances of the past which linked them together.

Madeleine Fleming remembered her; and over the poor girl's humble resting-place in the country, she caused to be erected a plain but beautiful shaft. That marble column, Madeleine, herself, decked with immortal wreaths.

John, the domestic, we must not forget to record, after the change had taken place in his old employer's fortune, had duly presented himself, and applied for restoration. The very impudence of the act, coupled with the indisputable fact that John was a good servant, secured him his old position.

Fenton Thorne had graduated with distinguished honor, and Stephen Smith was still with him.

We must not omit to state that Tim Smooth, who had so well impersonated young Thorne in the mock-marriage ceremony with Myra Hoxley, the *clairvoyant*, had been duly and severely thrashed by Stephen Smith; the affair netting the latter just \$53.37 1-2, and costs.

And now Madeleine's birth-night had again rolled around. This time, as in the olden days, the splendid mansion was aglow from top to bottom. But there were not many there this night to witness the happy scene; for Arthur Fleming had not forgotten how his *quondam* friends deserted him in the hour of his adversity.

The special scene which was witnessed, and to which we had reference, was the wedding of Fenton Thorne and Madeleine Fleming.

Stephen Smith, his dusky face radiant yet sad, clad in ball-room attire, stood close by the pair, as the clergyman read the solemn troth-words. Old Mr. Thorne, Fenton's father, too was there; and Captain Jack Kelson, and the poor, doting father, Arthur Fleming.

They were all.

It was a quiet, solemn scene; but glad marriage-bells were chiming cheerily in every heart.

Years passed and Arthur Fleming was gathered to his fathers.

Then Fenton Thorne, with his young wife, went westward, and dwelt in his father's splendid mansion in Herkimer. Old Mr. Thorne had died some years before.

The Fleming mansion was again sold out of the family—this time for good.

Stephen Smith had long since been separated from his bosom-friend. They often wrote to each other, and Stephen, who was practicing law in Louisville—or pretending to practice, for, half the time, he was gunning or fishing—had come on twice to see "Fent, my boy."

Then, as time rolled on, the ominous war-cloud of 1860 spread over the great American Republic, and the sound of drum and the clash of arms echoed over hill and plain. Then the ship-of-state emerged safe from the gale, and the old flag of our fathers floated from the mast-head.

Late one cool evening in the month of September, 1855—a year memorable in our annals—as Fenton Thorne and his still lovely and youthful wife were sitting in the front porch of their majestic mansion, looking, musingly, out over the purple hills and the red tinted forest—dreaming old-time, happy dreams, and living over other days again—a carriage suddenly rolled up and stopped at the gate.

Then, promptly and unhesitatingly, a person inside opened the carriage door and sprang out. After having his trunk, a large one, set down, the gentleman settled with the driver, and turned toward the house.

Fenton Thorne had already descended to meet his guest, whoever he might be.

The stranger was a tall, finely shaped, elegantly dressed man; but, one coat-sleeve was pinned across the broad chest; the sleeve was—empty.

Long, dark locks fell behind the stranger's ears, and a heavy, raven mustache, sprinkled here and there with silvery threads, swept over the mouth, even down upon the prominent chin. The complexion of that Indian-like face, was like bronze.

Slowly he drew near.

Fenton Thorne paused and held his breath, and then suddenly he dashed forward with a wild cry of joy, and flung his arms around that tall form.

Then from the stranger came the same familiar words and tones of old:

"God bless you, Fent, my boy!"

Then Madeleine, the matron, rushed down to meet and greet the old friend; and following her, came two bouncing boys, the one Stephen, the other Smith Thorne.

Stephen Smith, dear reader, has never left his old friends. He is with them now, a confirmed old bachelor, with his snug pile of money. There he will remain till his days of "sere and yellow leaf" have gone.

The good fellow has never breathed a word as to the side on which he fought during the civil conflict; but he points to his empty sleeve, and says in a low, earnest voice:

"I have had enough of it, Fent! and thank God! we all have the old flag again!"

One piece of war news Stephen imparted:

On a distant battle-field, at the set of sun, he had seen the dead body of—RALPH ROSS; and—yes, Stephen vowed it—the fellow was shot in the back!

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